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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this text is to offer information, including career development strategies, about sports officiating, an occupation that attracts little attention as a source of employment. The book presents fundamental techniques for building successful careers as qualified sports officials and illustrates how sports officiating can be taken from the hobby status to a profit-oriented business. Following the author's preface, the text is organized into 10 chapters: (1) Myths About Officiating; (2) Professional Affiliation (Choosing the Right Association); (3) Rules and Mechanics; (4) Thinking Like an Official; (5) No Harm, No Foul (No Calls Are the Unpublished Trade Secrets of Professional Sports Officials); (6) The Employment Picture; (7) Official Business (The Best Way to Make a Career Last Is To Put Business First); (8) A Four-year Apprenticeship Program for Sports Officials; (9) Communications; and (10) State and Local Associations. A glossary of sports officiating terms concludes the volume. (LL)

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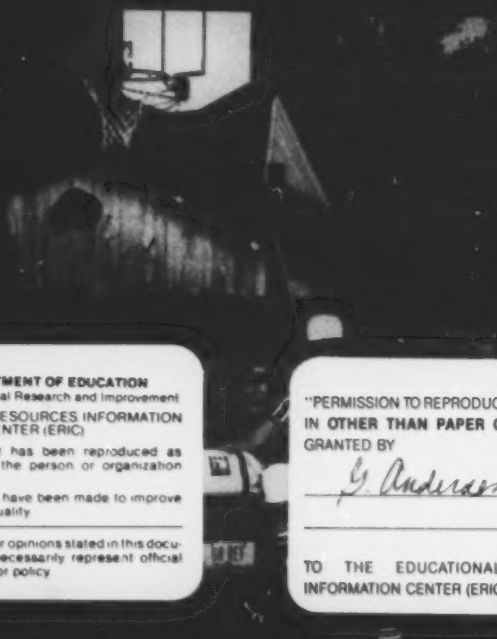

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by M.C. O'Bryant

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Making It as a Sports Official

M.C. O'Bryant

National Association for Sport
and Physical Education
An association of the
American Alliance for Health,
Physical Education, Recreation and Dance

Cover: Medical doctor/sports official Robert Allen Breedlove of Stillwater, Oklahoma, personifies a new breed of professionals who are discovering sports officiating as a rewarding second profession.
Referee magazine photograph by Jim Shideler.

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Purposes of the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance

The American Alliance is an educational organization, structured for the purposes of supporting, encouraging, and providing assistance to member groups and their personnel throughout the nation as they seek to initiate, develop, and conduct programs in health, leisure, and movement-related activities for the enrichment of human life.

Alliance objectives include:

1. Professional growth and development—to support, encourage, and provide guidance in the development and conduct of programs in health, leisure, and movement-related activities which are based on the needs, interests, and inherent capacities of the individual in today's society.

2. Communication—to facilitate public and professional understanding and appreciation of the importance and value of health, leisure, and movement-related activities as they contribute toward human well-being.

3. Research—to encourage and facilitate research which will enrich the depth and scope of health, leisure, and movement-related activities; and to disseminate the findings to the profession and other interested and concerned publics.

4. Standards and guidelines—to further the continuous development and evaluation of standards within the profession for personnel and programs in health, leisure, and movement-related activities.

5. Public affairs—to coordinate and administer a planned program of professional, public, and governmental relations that will improve education in areas of health, leisure, and movement-related activities.

6. To conduct such other activities as shall be approved by the Board of Governors and the Alliance Assembly, provided that the Alliance shall not engage in any activity which would be inconsistent with the status of an educational and charitable organization as defined in Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 or any successor provision thereto, and none of the said purposes shall at any time be deemed or construed to be purposes other than the public benefit purposes and objectives consistent with such educational and charitable status.

Preface

Sports officiating is a very visible profession, but one which people know remarkably little about. It is an exciting, profitable, and gratifying occupation, but attracts little attention as a source of employment.

Its low profile is an enigma because officiating offers such an outstanding array of personal rewards backed up by very equitable salaries. Yet it is remarkably unheralded by those who promote the various job markets. Sports officiating remains, for the most part, the exclusive province of a select few with well-placed connections in the sports world.

The purpose of this text is to change this pattern. The book contains valuable information, including career development strategies, which will permit readers to fashion their own futures as successful sports officials. Notwithstanding its part-time nature, sports officiating offers unprecedented opportunities for athletes who possess a zeal for both physical challenge and financial gain.

Nowhere can a sports enthusiast come closer to defying the old adage, "You can't have your cake and eat it too," than through professional sports officiating. As one young optimist sized it up, "As an official, I'm always guaranteed the best view in the stadium plus I'm always a winner because I pick up a check on the way out the door."

The writing of this book has been motivated by promptings from sports officials and trainers of sports officials who have expressed the need for a text detailing the fundamental techniques for building successful career paths as qualified sports officials. Through careful research and development the author has prepared a book that sets forth a simplified career development plan for sports officials. Care has been taken to ensure that materials presented are in full compliance with the rules and policies of the National Collegiate Athletic Association, National Federation of State High School Associations, the Amateur Athletic Union, and the sports governing bodies associated with the U.S. Olympic Committee.

The book illustrates how sports officiating can be taken from the hobby status to a profit-oriented business. At the same time it will greatly enhance the individual's personal understanding and enjoyment of his or her favorite sports.

Its unique features include a glossary of sports officiating terms and a four-year apprenticeship program for sports officials. The glossary, the first of its kind ever published, will have strong appeal

not only to sports officials, but also to sportswriters, play by play announcers, sportscasters, players, coaches, teachers, and others. The apprenticeship program, also the first of its kind to be presented, offers invaluable assistance to those planning to advance their careers as professional sports officials.

Since the earliest days of the profession, there has been an acute imbalance in published materials that focused on the "how to do" versus "what to do" aspects of preparing for a career as a sports official. Most instructional materials relating to sports officiating have been based on the premise that readers were incumbent officials. These materials emphasized the "what to do" while the critical "how to do" aspects of officiating, so vital to new officials, were neglected. This book was written with the express purpose of helping to correct this imbalance between the readily available officiating materials, such as the rules books that delineate "what to do," and the almost nonexistent training publications describing "how to do it."

Those who seek to enter the fraternity of sports officials are no longer obliged to suffer the agony and frustration of waiting, sometimes in vain, to be discovered. Here is a career road map that will give instructors and students alike a measure of independence in charting their own officiating paths.

Because of the disproportionately large numbers of individuals who officiate the major sports of basketball, football, and baseball, most references in this text are to those sports. However, this focus does not mean that success strategies outlined here are any less applicable to those who officiate in other sports. To the contrary, whether interested in soccer, ice hockey, lacrosse, tennis, gymnastics, or one of the major sports, the reader will discover that the professional information presented in this text will speed career development as a sports official.

M.C. O'Bryant

CHAPTER 1

Myths About Officiating

SPORTS OFFICIATING IS AN ENORMOUS PROFESSION THAT EMploys hundreds of thousands of people working in their favorite sport. These entrepreneurs profit handsomely by selling their services as sports contest judges, referees, umpires, and rules interpreters.

Professional sports officials play a key role in the furtherance of the competitive sports industry. They are the arbitrators in what has become one of the major growth industries of this century.

During any given week in the United States, more than ten million athletes will participate in organized sports that are officially sanctioned by the National Collegiate Athletic Association, National Federation of State High Schools Association, Amateur Athletic Union, or one of the hundreds of local athletic leagues. With few exceptions, all competition sanctioned by these associations makes use of paid officials.

This translates into a cadre of professional sports officials whose numbers are conservatively estimated to be nearing a million. For example, the National Federation of State High School Associations reported that during the 1990-91 season, it required 68,000 officials just to work the interscholastic basketball games.

Such large numbers have made it difficult for athletic directors and league commissioners to find the professionally trained officials required to fulfill the growing number of assignments.

Although competitive sports have been around for at least as long as recorded history, the idea of training specialists for the express purpose of serving as professional sports officials is a comparatively modern innovation. At the beginning of the 20th century, the custom of enlisting assistant coaches or calling spectators out of the stands to facilitate athletes' compliance with contest rules was a common occurrence at sports events.

It was not until the early 1920s that the various state athletic associations began to collaborate in order to promote commonality in the area of rules interpretations. A leader in setting standards for officiating was the National Association for Girls and Women in Sport, which in 1925 established a national Officials Committee that encouraged establishment of local rating boards to ensure a supply of trained officials for women's basketball.

Another half century passed before the National Federation published its first officials manual. Teaching films designed to provide officials and others with a more thorough knowledge of the rules were introduced in the 1940s.

Referee Magazine, which began publication in 1976, has done much to improve the quality of officiating in all the major sports. Moreover, through its scholarly treatment of sports officiating, the magazine has done an outstanding job of fostering acceptance of the idea that sports officials are, by virtue of their skills and knowledge, true professionals and should be trained and compensated as such.

Despite efforts by the National Federation, NCAA, *Referee Magazine*, and others, however, in some parts of the nation only limited progress has been made in getting officials to think of themselves as bona fide professionals and to become affiliated with one of the recognized professional organizations. Freelancers of the sports community make it exceedingly difficult to portray officiating as the business oriented profession that it is. Contributing to the slow growth of professionalization of the sports officials are those states that still do not have well-defined education and credentialing programs for officials. Even as we approach the turn of the century, none of the major athletic associations maintains a clear set of standards for officials who are credentialed to work their officially sanctioned contests.

Sports officiating offers so many innate benefits that some officials have tended to treat officiating more as a hobby or as a form of recreation than as a profession. They believe that such amenities as exposure to the crowd, being on the field of play with the contestants, control over the contest, and the public recognition all figure in as compensation for their work.

Since sports officiating has so much intrinsic appeal, it has not required any type of national organization to promote its growth. This remarkable popularity has not been without its drawbacks, however. The lack of a national sports officials organization endowed with the authority to select officials, set professional standards, provide universally accredited training, develop guidelines for making job assignments, and establish wage scales has caused many to be critical of the sports officiating profession.

The absence of a central governing body has also contributed to a serious public information gap. Lax standards have allowed a lot of misinformation and false perceptions to pervade the officiating profession. Aspirant sports officials need to be aware that much of the negative information circulated about careers in sports officiating is based upon myth and half truths.

Some of the most common myths that have been perpetuated about the profession of sports officiating are briefly described here, together with the facts of the situation.

MYTH: There Are Already Too Many Sports Officials

This line of reasoning is perpetuated primarily by sports officials themselves. There are those who, insecure in their own jobs, do not wish to add to their woes by encouraging new competitors. The fact is that their fears are without merit—sports officiating is one of the fastest growing professions in the nation and the need for well-trained officials increases each year.

This growth, which outdistances the general population expansion, is driven by a combination of influences that include the addition to high school and college programs of such diverse new activities as soccer and water polo, major expansions in women's programs, and a general increase in the number of community-sponsored athletic leagues.

The dramatic increase in the number of women participating in organized sports is illustrated by the 1984-85 sports participation survey conducted by the National Federation of State High School Associations, which showed a six-fold increase in the number of female participants during the period from 1971 to 1985.

Based on the conservative figure of one official for each 20 participants, this creates a demand for an additional 73,000 new officials for this group alone.

MYTH: Officials Are Inadequately Paid

In 1991, PAC-10 football officials received $375 per game, plus an additional fee for travel and living allowances. More to the norm, from $150 to $200 per week for anywhere from four to sixteen hours of work is a reasonable objective for the average senior official.

These earnings may be achieved through various approaches, such as one Level I university men's game, two Level I university women's games, four high school games, three junior college games, or ten industrial league games per week. The industrial

league schedule is not as difficult as it might at first appear, since these games are played with a running clock and are usually run off on an hourly basis.

By working more than one sport, over a nine-month work year, a sports official at the high school level should find it relatively easy to earn from $5,000 to $7,000 per year. At the college and university level, earnings will increase to $8,000 or more per year.

MYTH: There Is No Future in Officiating

All factors considered, the sports officiating profession takes a back seat to none in its capacity for creating career development opportunities.

What other profession, for example, holds forth the potential of starting out at $5 per hour and progressing to $50 per hour while at the same time pursuing another career full time? This scenario has been repeated time after time by officials who started out as students earning spending money by working little league and wound up officiating Level I university contests, while at the same time holding down a responsible job in a totally unrelated field.

Not only is there a future in sports officiating, but a person will find few other professions that offer so few restrictions upon career development goals. Constraints such as minimum age, expensive start-up cost, and educational degrees are no impediment to career development as a sports official.

Among the related careers that offer additional opportunities for officials are: supervisor of officials, sales of officials supplies, publication of professional newsletters, clinician for rules and mechanics, and trainer of officials.

MYTH: Those Who Can't Coach, Referee

Undeniably, the legal qualifications for becoming a sports official are less stringent than those required for coaching positions. In actual practice, however, it's unlikely that an individual could ever achieve top level status as an official without possessing a professional resume equally as impressive as that of his or her counterpart in the coaching profession.

The fact is that a major segment of the sports officials population is comprised of coaches. Frequently, these individuals officiate contests below the level at which they coach. College coaches, for example, often officiate contests at the high school level. Coaches also frequently coach in one sport and officiate in another. Since

games are usually played on different dates, coaches in the men's leagues can officiate in the women's leagues and vice versa.

These employment arrangements serve to provide the sports leagues with an outstanding cadre of officials who not only are expert in rules interpretation, but also relate to the game from the coaching perspective.

MYTH: Officials Are Not Athletes

The ranks of sports officials are replete with outstanding athletes. Many are still active players in one sport while officiating in another.

In sports such as basketball (where two person mechanics are employed) or soccer, officials must be able to go stride for stride with the players. This requires exceptional athletic stamina. In many cases, officials have heavier schedules than the players. Officials often work more than one contest per day and as many as four or five per week.

The fact that officials are athletes is more than just academic; it is a matter of practical significance. Top quality officials, like the athletes who are directly involved in the actual competition, remain physically fit, and by so doing they can effectively anticipate playing situations, give the appearance of belonging, possess a correct sense of timing, and enjoy the benefits of good reflexes.

MYTH: Officials Get NO Respect

Although his assessment of sports officials may have been a little exalted, Larry Neuman, writing for the *Springfield Union*, managed to capture the sentiments of most with his parody on Joyce Kilmer's classic poem, "Trees."

Referees

I think that I shall never see
a satisfactory referee
About whose head a halo shines,
Whose merits rate reporters' lines,
One who calls them as they are
And not as I should wish, by far.

A gent who leans not either way,
But, lets the boys decide the play.
A guy who'll sting the coach who yaps
From Siwash Hi or Old Millsaps.
Poems are made by fools like me
But only God could referee.

James Naismith, who invented the game of basketball, clearly respected officials as men of exceptional character and praised their role in helping make his game a success. "The position of an official is a very responsible one," he said, "and on his rulings depend to a great degree, the value of the game."

Despite the many myths surrounding sports officiating, the official is an athlete who, because of his professional appearance and thorough knowledge of rules and mechanics, gains respect and personal recognition—and has a bright future.
Photo courtesy Cliff Keen Athletic Sox & Jox.

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Paradoxically, the principal advocates of the "No respect" myth are a few self-pitying officials who delight in calling attention to their own obtuse perceptions of sports officials. They have gone so far as to coin their own lament. An official, they say, "is only as good as his or her last call." Such a heavy handed assessment is without justification. Good sports officials, like other good professional people, are held in high esteem both in the performance of their duties and as members of the community.

Some officials allow themselves to become so unsettled at the hoots and hisses of a rowdy crowd that they miss the oft expressed gestures of respect. This type of mental behavior is analogous to looking at a bouquet of roses and seeing only thorns.

Sports officials, like other professionals, will have moments of positive personal recognition. Not surprisingly, greater job satisfaction is enjoyed by those who possess the ability to accentuate the positive aspects of officiating thereby reducing the negative.

MYTH: Sports Officiating Is Not Truly a Profession

Of all the myths about sports officials, none is easier to dispel than the allegation that officials are not truly professionals.

Sports officials clearly meet a principal criterion for achieving status as professionals—they are paid for their services. Comparatively speaking, officials receive anywhere from three to sometimes as high as 50 times the national minimum wage for their services.

Other important professional traits that are characteristic of sports officiating include:

1. Self employment
2. Management of one's own work schedule
3. Choosing one's own work sites
4. Professional identity
5. Irrevocable decision making authority
6. Public acclaim.

The professional status of sports officials is recognized by those with whom they do business. At most institutions, athletic directors recognize the importance of the role of the officials and make every effort to ensure their comfort and professional dignity. It is standard practice for employing institutions to provide clean and secure dressing rooms for officials. It is the custom at most sports events to introduce the officials at the beginning of the contest along with the players and coaches. Also, officials frequently receive credit for their work from players and coaches during postgame activities. In many

parts of the country, sports editors regularly print articles crediting officials for a job well done.

During recent years, the public information gap relative to the sports officiating profession has been significantly narrowed by the publication of a number of professional newsletters and magazines. By far, the one that has contributed the most toward allaying unfavorable myths about the sports officiating profession is *Referee Magazine*. After beginning publication in the mid-1970s, *Referee* has become to professional sports officials what the *Wall Street Journal* is to professional money managers.

CHAPTER 2

Professional Affiliation

Choosing the Right Association

SPORTS OFFICIALS ASSOCIATIONS ARE SIMPLY GROUPS OF individual officials who have joined forces in an effort to enhance their ability to promote their individual and collective interests as professional sports officials. They can be either local or national, and in most instances, the same people belong to both.

Local associations do not exist in all parts of the country, but where they do, they usually control who is assigned to which contests. A typical association will consist of 50 to 100 members and have responsibility for assigning officials at 10 to 15 schools.

Membership fees for belonging to a local association normally range from $30 to $75 per year. Usually this fee covers only one sport. Officials working more than one sport have to pay additional membership fees. In most instances, the associations use their revenues to pay the assigning official and to purchase training materials such as rules books and related publications for their members. Sports officials associations have traditionally maintained an open membership policy, which allows any active official to gain membership.

In those parts of the country where local associations are in existence, for anyone planning a career path as a sports official, membership in the association is the only realistic approach to finding games to officiate. Where local sports officials associations have yet to be instituted, the aspirant officials are basically on their own, but the self-motivated, well-organized official working independently can still make it.

Local sports officials associations are prominent on the East and West Coasts. They are far less common in Southern and South-

western states. In those areas where there are no local associations, athletic directors usually contract directly with state certified officials for their services. The independent official can learn about procedures for certification as a sports official by contacting the interscholastic association for the state in which he or she resides. Certification is relatively simple and usually entails paying a licensing fee, taking the appropriate test, completing the administrative paperwork, and in some cases attending a rules clinic.

It should be understood that not all states offer a certification program. Many state athletic associations rely upon the standard Part I, Part II tests supplied by the National Federation as the primary criteria for certification. Even in those states where certification is offered, there are plenty of leagues, such as municipal and church leagues, where formal certification is not required.

Although minimum requirements are often simple, certification should not be treated casually. Quality officials will enhance their own credibility by joining professionally minded groups such as National Association of Sports Officials sponsored by *Referee Magazine* or IFIOA sponsored by National Federation.

Mailing addresses and other contact information regarding each of the state organizations are listed in the National Federation's Handbook. Information on how to acquire a copy of the National Federation Handbook is provided in this book.

Multi-Association Membership

Sports officials associations at or above the high school level often have an enrollment in excess of the number of officials actually needed. In order for individual officials to achieve a full and well balanced work schedule, it is often necessary to maintain membership in more than one officials association.

As a rule, even the best official will not be assigned more than one or two varsity games per week from a particular association. Such an abbreviated schedule, unless at Division I university level, is not enough work to allow an official to keep in shape physically and to make officiating financially rewarding.

Membership in more than one association can be important when trying to upgrade the level of contests being worked. Developing officials often discover that it is necessary to apply a number of different strategies during the course of their career development.

A new official will make mistakes during his/her first few seasons. This can easily result in the individual becoming stereotyped in that association as something less than a tournament quality official. Another stereotype has to do with the fact that during the rookie

year, an official is almost certain to be assigned a lot of freshman and/or junior varsity contests. If the individual is not constantly striving to progress into a more advanced level, he or she may find that others will begin to characterize him or her as a permanent fixture at the lower level.

This can turn into a double whammie for the official. First, assigning officials and coaches are more than happy to leave the official at the frosh level, where he or she is doing a good job and where good officials are always in demand. Second, the longer an official remains in an apprenticeship league, the more he or she tends to believe and cause others to believe, that it is the level for which he or she is best suited. When an official becomes a victim of this type of stereotyping, one option is to align with another association where the official can be judged on merit and not upon past records.

However, officials trying to upgrade by switching or joining a second association must take care not to jump from the frying pan into the fire. Specifically, an official should not expand membership into a new association only to end up again accepting assignments at a level that is not going to bolster officiating career objectives.

As an official advances from the high school leagues into the college ranks, he or she will need to be affiliated with more than one association. It's highly unlikely that as a rookie official in a college league, one will be fortunate enough to receive a sufficient number of college assignments to keep busy. So before severing ties with the old association, the wise official will make certain to be well established in a new one.

It should also be noted that there are associations that frown upon the practice of officials holding membership in other associations. Their arguments in support of such restrictions are diverse, ranging from a concern that the official will develop poor work habits in another association, to the demand that the assigning official have uncontested freedom in selecting the times and places for the association's officials to work. Nothing will arouse the ire of an assigning official more quickly than for an official in the league to reject an assignment on the excuse that he or she is already booked in another association. However, in the more professionally managed associations dedicated to developing quality officials, the general rule is that if an official can find a game at a higher level of officiating, he or she should take it.

The top-notch sports official is skilled in both rules interpretation and officiating mechanics. And when it comes to good mechanics, positioning is everything. This beach volleyball official is in excellent position to make net calls.
Photo by Bob Messina.

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CHAPTER 3

Rules and Mechanics

It's an Ever Changing World— Keeping a Career Alive Means Keeping Skills Current!

BECOMING A TOP-NOTCH SPORTS OFFICIAL ENTAILS THE MASTERY of two clearly defined disciplines: rules interpretation and officiating mechanics.

For all intents and purposes the rules and mechanics for all competitive sports within the United States are governed by one of three organizations:

National Federation of State High School Associations
National Collegiate Athletic Association
National governing body for each individual sport

Each of these organizations has its own rules committees, which annually modify the rules of the various sports to reflect the respective association's game philosophy. Each organization has its own separate set of approved officiating mechanics.

Rules books, officials manuals which contain the mechanics, and the related publications for each of the organizations are revised each year. Because of the annual revisions, it is impractical to include the actual rules and mechanics as a part of this text. They must be purchased separately at the beginning of each season.

There are three principal areas where changes occur regularly:

rules
officiating mechanics
rules interpretations

Activities in each of these areas are chronicaled in their respective publications. The rules are published in the rules books, officiating mechanics are found in the officials manuals, and rules interpretations are the focus of the case books.

These publications are integral parts of the training programs detailed in this text, and each new revision should be acquired and studied as a regular part of an official's preseason preparation. Complete and confidant familiarity with the annual guidelines requires a well planned and up-to-date program of continuing professional education.

To fashion a quality continuing professional education program, a number of training aids and supplemental materials must first be assembled. To help in this effort, here is a synopsis of the instruments essential to a viable education program and their sources.

The Rules

The official high school rules for:

Baseball	Basketball	Field Hockey
Football	Girls Gymnastics	Boys Gymnastics
Ice Hockey	Soccer	Softball
Swimming/Diving	Water Polo	Track & Field
Volleyball	Wrestling	

National Federation of State High School Associations
11724 Plaza Circle
P.O. Box 2062
Kansas City, MO 64195
Phone (816) 464-5400

The official collegiate rules for:

Baseball	Basketball, men's/women's
Football	Ice Hockey
Lacrosse, men's	Soccer, men's
Rifle, men's/women's	Skiing, men's/women's
Swimming & Diving, men's/women's	Track & Field and Cross Country, men's/women's
Water Polo	Wrestling

National Collegiate Athletic Association
Nall Avenue at 63rd St.
Box 1906
Mission, KS 66201
Phone (913) 384-3220

The official amateur rules for:

Archery	Basketball	Boxing
Canoeing	Cycling	Field Hockey
Figure Skating	Ice Hockey	Judo
Racquet Ball	Rifle	Ski
Soccer	Swimming	Handball
Table Tennis	Volleyball	Water Polo
Weight Lifting		

The rules for these sports are available from the sports governing body for the specific sport. Many of the these national groups are located at the U.S. Olympic Committee headquarters office, 1750 East Boulder St., Colorado Springs, CO 80909. Phone (719(632-5551.

Officiating Mechanics

High school sports officials manuals:

Baseball	Basketball	Football
Track & Field	Wrestling	

National Federation of State High School Associations
11724 Plaza Circle
Box 20626
Kansas City, MO 64195
Phone (816) 464-5400

Collegiate sports officials manual for:

Basketball

Collegiate Commissioners Association
Box 569420
Dallas, TX 75356-9420
Phone: (214) 638-3722

Rules Interpretation

Official high school case books for:

Baseball	Basketball	Football
Track & Field	Volleyball	Wrestling

National Federation of State High School Associations
11724 Plaza Circle
P.O. Box 206
Kansas City, MO 64195
Phone (816) 464-5400

Reference Materials

National Federation Handbook for High Schools

National Federation of State High School Associations
11724 Plaza Circle
P.O. Box 206
Kansas City, MO 64195
Phone (816) 464-5400

NCAA Sports Library
National Collegiate Athletic Association Publishing
Box 1906
Mission, KS 66201
Phone (913) 831-8300

Politics

In a profession such as sports officiating where there is no central governing body or any uniform certification standards, it might seem that politics would play a key role in career development. However, the world of sports competition is too result-oriented for any factor other than tried and proven performance to make much of a difference. It is true that "cronyism" often gets a person an audition in sports officiating, but sticking it out and achieving acclaim as a top level official requires more than just knowing the right people.

Over-reliance on political clout is a mistake that is made time and again by those looking for favor based upon whom they know, rather than how they perform. The win/win mentality of politicians does not mesh well with the win/lose reality of competitive sports. In other words, even the best of officials stands little chance of pleasing everyone all the time.

The following inventory of political behavior has been developed to aid individual officials in assessing their own political proclivities.

Mark responses "Yes" or "No." If an official can truthfully answer "no" to each of these situations, it's a safe bet that he or she is not following self-serving political motives.

As a rule, a good official will—

____ Before the game, spend more time with school personnel including the coaches than in conversing with fellow officials.

____ Share information about other teams in the league with individual players and coaches.

____ Let players know that he/she is personally interested in their individual achievements.

____ Spend as much time as possible at the scorer's table between periods and during time outs.

____ Use influence with the coach to insulate a partner who doesn't enjoy the same chummy relationship.

____ Stay around a few minutes following the contest to discuss points of interest with players and coaches.

____ Make a special effort to let a coach know he or she has done a particularly fine job of coaching.

____ Discuss with coaches the performance of individual players.

____ Explain key calls to the fans.

____ Make special efforts to get to know coaches on a first name basis.

____ Always be accommodating by granting a simple request such as allowing the coach a few extra minutes to warm-up if his or her team arrives late.

____ Make a special effort to get to know players on a first name basis.

____ Call a coach at home or the office to provide a rules citation of a controversial call.

The above inventory of "political" behavior serves as a reminder to the wise official of what *not* to do to demonstrate proper professional actions for the coach.

Perhaps the single most important precursor to thinking like an official is looking like an official. Knowing you are properly attired does wonders for your mental attitude and starts you on the road toward acquiring the four common traits of top-rated officials: consistency, courtesy, control, and correctness. ***Photo courtesy Cliff Keen Athletic Sox & Jox.***

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CHAPTER 4

Thinking Like an Official

Thinking of Yourself as an Official and Thinking Like an Official Require Different Sets of Skills and Abilities!

CALL IT PROFESSIONAL SAVVY, HAVING THE HANG OF THINGS, innate ability, or streetwise officiating—by any title, "thinking like an official" is an essential critical ingredient in the development of a creditable official. It is this quality that enables an official to make the tough call in a manner that does not draw attention to him/herself or disrupt the orderly flow of competition. Thinking like an official is a quality that is developed only by on-the-job experience. No amount of book knowledge will substitute.

In the intense win/lose atmosphere of athletic competition, wise officials are always mindful of the fact that building a successful career as a sports official involves far more than a knowledge of the rules. They know it requires applying the rules with prudence and integrity so that even in defeat, the losing team feels that they have received fair and equitable treatment.

Thinking like an official means that judgment calls are not predicated so much upon a rules technicality as upon the more equitable determination of whether one contestant has actually gained an unfair advantage. The wise official recognizes that a competitor can be disadvantaged not only by poor judgment in rules interpretation—he or she can be just as severely damaged by an official's indiscretions on the field of play.

An official who may be a rules expert, but lacks officiating savvy can quite unintentionally put a team at a disadvantage. Examples of such actions are:

- Directing the coaches' focus from the game activities to the officials.
- Taking players out of their game by making them overly conscious of the officiating.
- Disrupting the flow of the contest by unwarranted time delays.
- Creating confusion through unclear communications.
- Arousing undue emotion by arguing with players or coaches.

Seasoned officials recognize that their personal demeanor can have a profound influence upon the action and reactions of contest participants. They also know that by making a correct call, but making it in a wrong way, they can distract from the contest and consequently destroy their usefulness as a sports official.

There is no patterned formula for training the novice to think like an official, but there are a number of characteristics which most top-rated officials have in common. These common traits, often referred to as the "Four Cs," are Consistency, Courtesy, Control, and Correctness.

Consistency

Unquestionably, the quality that coaches most frequently demand of an official is consistency. There are few issues upon which coaches are more fully agreed than the concept that says, "We don't care whether officials call the game tightly or loosely, just so long as they call it consistently."

More than any other phase of officiating, consistency requires that much celebrated combination of skills and knowledge.

Here are six fundamental attributes that officials must possess in order to achieve consistency in officiating: courage, reflexes, poise, self-confidence, knowledge, and familiarity with game mechanics.

Courage—A top-rated official must have the courage to make the correct call, albeit unpopular, even when the outcome of the contest hangs in balance. No event in the life of a sports official is more unsettling than having to make a call that decides the ultimate winner of an athletic contest. Nevertheless, to back off on a crucial call is a reprehensible act of incompetence. An official must have the courage to make the correct call, its consequences notwithstanding!

An official's courage quotient can be evaluated by using the following questions as evaluative criteria.

In your latest performance as an official did you have the courage to make a call even though it was sure to result in:

- A key player being declared ineligible to continue to compete.
- Points already scored being disallowed.
- Conflict with a call made by another official.
- A rash of protest from the coaches and fans
- Two or more unpopular calls being made back to back against the same team.
- Giving the benefiting team the opportunity to win the game as a direct result of the penalty.
- Further penalizing a team already at a disadvantage as a result of penalties.

Reflexes—Actions on the field of competition are usually taking place so swiftly that unless the official has split second reflexes, he or she will miss an infraction on one occasion and catch it on the next time around. Inconsistencies of this nature make for an unhappy rapport between officials and athletic competitors. Players are always more accepting of calls that are made intuitively and immediately. Late or delayed calls can never be made with an acceptable degree of consistency.

Poise—The essence of consistency in sports officiating is poise—self-control on the part of the official. An official who has trouble controlling his or her emotions stands little chance of contributing to the equilibrium of competing teams. Officials who fail to instill an atmosphere of orderliness often sow the seeds of their own demise in the sports world.

In a boomerang effect, nervous behavior among players and coaches is almost certain to exacerbate the emotions of an easily excited official. When this happens, the prospects of consistency on the part of the agitated official are all but impossible.

Self-Confidence—Frequently, being consistent means having to make the unpopular call. This is particularly true in cases where the home team is committing the same infraction time and again.

Helped along by the jeers of coaches and fans, an official who isn't totally certain of his or her judgment may, after awhile, become self-conscious about having to make an inordinate number of calls against the same team. Feeling a need to more evenly balance the calls, a weak official will lighten up and not apply the rules so literally. To have applied the rules less rigidly from the outset of the game might have been well within the purview of sound officiating, but to back off once a tenor has been set shows a lack of self-confidence and a clear violation of the principle of consistency.

Knowledge—A deficiency of knowledge relative to the rules will quickly reveal itself through inconsistency in calls. For example, in basketball, knowing the subtle differences in the rules that distinguish a block from a charge or an intentional foul from a common

foul has a profound influence upon an official's ability to maintain consistency.

Secure in the knowledge that he/she possesses a complete mastery of the rules, an official can make difficult calls consistently and without fear.

Game Mechanics—The importance of good mechanics in promoting consistency is often overlooked. Nonetheless, it is a critical element that officials strive to perfect. Officials who make calls when they are not in the proper position to do so are flirting with catastrophe. Similarly, the official who employs erroneous mechanics creates inconsistencies that lead to breakdowns in game administration and loss of the official's personal credibility.

Courtesy

Anytime victory and personal challenge are at stake, prospects for emotional outbursts and acts of discourtesy are greatly increased. Anyone who has ever witnessed an athletic contest, even if only on TV, is fully aware of the intense emotions present among players, coaches, and fans. From the moment the sports official arrives at the game, he or she plays a key role in controlling the emotional levels of those who have an interest in the outcome of the contest. By exercising the appropriate degree of courtesy, good officials can have a positive and stabilizing effect upon the emotional level of others connected with the competition.

The ability to maintain composure in the midst of a highly charged emotional setting is a mark of an outstanding official. Expecting officials to exhibit courtesy toward excited players and coaches might seem to be an unreasonable request—but seasoned sports officials know it pays big dividends over the course of a sports officiating career.

Many less skillful officials rely too heavily upon their whistles to control the temperament of the contest. The traffic cop image of these whistleblowers is counterproductive to the goal of a contest free of tension and discord. The authoritative aura of such individuals does not come across well in the sports arena.

Officials must maintain control, but the control has to come from his or her demonstrated proficiency in rules interpretation and good mechanics, not through intimidation. Professionally-minded officials should not underestimate the irreparable damage they can inflict upon their careers through discourteous acts toward those who have a role to play in any aspect of the athletic event.

It is true that when conflicts develop, the official is almost always going to prevail—at least for the moment. However, when contro-

versial calls come, the official should handle them in a professional and courteous manner, taking the greatest of care not to further inflame a potentially explosive situation.

The wise sports official recognizes that one of the biggest myths in sports is that the official always has the last word. The last word is heard in the conference room when the coaches and athletic directors decide among themselves which officials will be invited to work again at their institutions.

Courtesy on the field of competition is nothing more than the practice of good manners, but good manners are not one of those talents with which we are born. Either they are developed through conscious and persistent effort or they don't exist.

The following lists will help officials searching for ways to improve their courtesy quotients. First is a list of things to do, then a list of things the conscientious official should not do.

Courtesy-conscious officials will:

- Introduce self and fellow officials to coaches and appropriate game assistants.
- Before the game begins, provide clear and courteous response to any relevant questions.
- Be businesslike in handling pregame responsibilities.
- In a friendly tone of voice, advise both coaches when contest action is about to begin.
- Report calls to official scorer in a lucid and polite manner.
- Look, act, and speak in a pleasant and professional manner.
- Listen attentively to appropriate remarks directed by coaches and team captains.
- Make a habit of saying please when making a request of the coach.
- Where appropriate, alert players and coaches in order to prevent infractions and other disruptions to the contest.
- Whenever possible, extend players and coaches the opportunity to have the last word.
- At the conclusion of the game, express appreciation to fellow officials such as scorers and timers.

Courtesy-conscious officials will NOT:

- Engage in lighthearted acts of frivolity such as laughing and joking with players, coaches, and others.
- Spend significantly more time with one coach than the other during pregame instructions and introductions.
- Preempt others in the performance of their duties, e.g., custodians, ball boys/girls, scorer, or timer.

- Fail to keep fellow officials informed about anything that might have an impact upon the contest proceedings.
- Scold or warn players and coaches unless it clearly serves the best interest of both teams.
- Invade a team's bench area by consistently intruding in their assigned space.
- Emphasize the fact that officials and coaches are personal acquaintances by fraternizing on the sidelines.
- Assess penalties in an emotional or demeaning fashion.
- Repeatedly interrupt a team's huddle to pass along information readily available from the team's own sources.
- Bait players and coaches by reminding them that if the first penalty doesn't curtail their actions, it will be a pleasure to assess another.
- Use touch as a communications aid, when conversing with players or coaches.
- Resort to a staring contest with players or coaches in order to demonstrate an unwillingness to be compromised.

The following is an excerpt dealing with courtesy taken from the 1988-89 National Federation Officials Manual:

> Courtesy is the lubricant for good human relations. Sometimes officials are afraid that politeness implies softness or politicking. This is far from the truth. A polite person can be very strict and exacting. Cheerfulness and optimism tend to bring out the same qualities in players.
>
> A good official will be courteous, but will avoid "visiting," with players during the game. The quickest way to lose respect of coaches and players is to get the reputation of being a horse trader. All actions should reflect strict and total impartiality.

Resource materials helpful to officials in their efforts to create a more courteous and professional image and at the same time provide valuable training in rules interpretation include a series of outstanding video cassette tapes produced by the National Federation. This series includes such titles as: *Football Now, Basketball, the Right Way, Baseball at Its Best, Challenge of Track and Field,* and *The Winning Edge* (wrestling). These training aids are all available through the National Federation Distribution Center, 11724 Plaza Circle, Box 20626, Kansas City, MO 64195.

Courtesy can compensate for a lot of imperfections. A courteous official may be weak in both rules interpretation and mechanics and still manage to maintain a successful career as a sports official. On the other hand, the official who has a problem with exhibiting proper courtesy needs to be thinking change—either of attitude or profession, but it must be one or the other.

Gaining and maintaining control of sports competition is the mark of good officiating. Here basketball official Howard Burley demonstrates the art of remaining in control and staying focused even when sideline distractions have reached a peak.
Photo by Bob Messina.

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Control

Game control is something that officials need to begin to cultivate from the first moment they accept responsibility for the contest. Control is the essence of any well-officiated contest. Too often, inexperienced officials mistakenly think they can count upon coaches, players, and others to assist in controlling the contest. Unfortunately, these groups more often represent the problem rather than the solution.

Being schooled as they are in the art of staving off defeat, overzealous coaches and participants find it is almost impossible to resist the temptation to employ illegal strategies to prevent losing the game. When the contest deteriorates to this stage, an official may find that he or she represents the last line of resistance between game control and the riot squad. Here is where many officials have rediscovered the time worn adage, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."

Here are a few pointers that will help the official gain and maintain control of sports competitions:

- Control pregame activities by arriving with other game officials at least 30 minutes before the game is to start, and earlier where league policy dictates.
- Demonstrate a commitment to professionalism by dressing in the proper attire.
- When in doubt, confer with fellow officials.
- Maintain a businesslike posture when interfacing with school officials, players, and coaches.
- Keep pregame instructions to team captains brief and to the point.
- Be consistent, be correct, and be courteous.
- Keep the contest moving at a brisk pace.
- Avoid verbal confrontations with players and coaches.
- Make calls quickly and decisively—never leaving any doubt.
- Never display emotions of anger or frustration when signaling or reporting game related happenings.
- Before leaving the locker room to start the game, ensure that there is agreement among officials regarding areas of responsibility and communication signals.

Correctness

Of all the qualities that successful sports officials must possess, correctness is unique. Inadequacies and weakness in other areas are annoyances that may result in strained emotions, but as a rule,

these professional indiscretions will not have an impact upon the outcome of the contest. Such is not the case where the element of correctness is the issue. An incorrect call can easily result in a team or individual being awarded a victory to which they are not entitled.

With scholarships, professional contracts, and play-off opportunities at stake, correctness is of colossal importance. It is, therefore, imperative that officials have an impeccable knowledge of the contest rules. However, it must be stressed that a *knowledge* of the rules is only the first step in achieving correctness.

Sports officials must also become expert at the business of assessing penalties and awarding recompense. Educating oneself in the rules of a particular sport is not as simple as memorizing the list of hard and fast rules that govern the activity. An official must also come to understand the intent of the rule and know how it is meant to apply in different situations and under varying circumstances.

To fully understand the principle of intent, the apprentice official must make a careful study of the Comments on the Rules section that appears near the back of the National Federation of State High School Associations rules books.

The most persistent criticism of those who train sports officials is that, while they usually do a superb job of teaching the rules, they often neglect to teach the penalties, and this can spell disaster. The coach may graciously accept a correct call and then explode when the official assesses the wrong penalty.

In most contact sports, a single rule may have a variety of different penalties depending upon the nature of the infraction. For example, in basketball, a personal foul may result in penalties ranging from the offended team getting the ball out of bounds to the offended team getting free throws in addition to the ball out of bounds. In addition, the opponent who fouled could be suspended from the contest.

Calling infractions is always easier than assessing the penalties. This is because making a call is primarily an act of reporting what the official observes. In fact, in most instances one really doesn't even have to know the rules to realize something is wrong. For example, a person who had never before seen a football game would likely sense that a player who reaches out and tosses an opponent to the turf by means of gripping his face mask should be called to order. This would be an easy call to make, but assessing the penalty would first require the official to determine the intent of the act and then recall the specific award to which the offended player is entitled.

The following guidelines are provided as a ready reference source for officials who are committed to achieving correctness in sports officiating.

- Develop a mastery of the new rules prior to the start of each season.
- Avoid getting rules for various leagues confused; NCAA rules differ from the National Federation's high school rules.
- Make certain to have a thorough understanding of all penalties and awards.
- Make it a personal commitment to score high on all rules tests.
- When unsure of the rule, don't make the call unless it is absolutely necessary.
- Unless association policy requires, don't carry a rules book on to the floor or field of play.
- When unsure of the penalty, consult with fellow official(s).
- Make certain that scorers, timers, and clock operators have a clear understanding of duties and responsibilities.
- During the pregame conference, review all new rules enacted since the past season.
- Never allow factors other than strict adherence to the rules to influence calls.
- Never make a call based upon circumstantial evidence. If the official cannot actually see the infraction, the call should not be made.
- Never change a judgment call.
- If a correctable error has been made, make the correction promptly and decisively with as little disruption to play as possible.
- Understand and judiciously use the "no call" concept (see Chapter 5).

CHAPTER 5

No Harm, No Foul

No Calls Are the Unpublished Trade Secrets of Professional Sports Officials.

A "NO CALL" IS A CONSCIOUS DECISION ON THE PART OF AN official to ignore an infraction which, if called, would place the offended player or team at an even greater disadvantage. Quality officiating does not entail blowing the whistle every time an incidental infraction affords the opportunity. It is, on the other hand, the ability of an official to apply the rules with the same prudence and equity at all times while ensuring that neither team exploits the rules to gain an unfair advantage.

Such officiating is accomplished with a minimum of disruption to play. A lack of understanding relative to the concept of "no call" gives rise to whistleblowing officiating that takes the contest out of the hands of the athletes and transforms it into a symposium on rules trivia.

What makes the "no call" such an anomaly is that in spite of its prominent role in officiating, it is not mentioned in any of the rules related publications. A clear concept may take years of officiating to master and, although it may seem to be a contradiction, "no calls" are basic to journeyman level job performance.

Despite the fact that rules books and officials manuals do not refer to "no calls," recognition of the need for application of the concept is not new. The late Oswald Tower, who served as editor and official rules interpreter of the basketball guide for many years dating back to 1914, was among the first to agitate for greater discretion on the part of officials in applying the rules.

The substance of Tower's officiating philosophy was, "It is the purpose of the rules to penalize a player who by reason of an illegal

act placed the opponent at a disadvantage." The key phrase is, of course, "placed the opponent at a disadvantage." If the opponent is not placed at a disadvantage, then one has to question the wisdom of disrupting play when this can be justified only through the most literal interpretation of the rules.

In his book, *The Art of Officiating Sports*, John Bunn, former basketball coach at Colorado State College, Greeley, was even more emphatic in arguing for the official's prerogative in applying the rules. Although the term "no call" was not used at the time his work was written, he deserves credit for stating the concept, if not for coining the phrase. The essence of Bunn's philosophy states:

> It is not the intent that the rules shall be interpreted literally. Rather, they should be applied in relation to the effect which the action of players has upon their opponents. If they are unfairly affected as a result of a violation of the rules, then the transgressor should be penalized. If there has been no appreciable effect upon the progress of the game, then the game should not be interrupted. The act should be ignored. It is incidental and not vital. Realistically and practically, no violation has occurred.

This thesis, sometimes stated as the "No harm, no foul principle," has withstood the test of time and remains one of the most viable working philosophies among sports officials today.

An analysis of the following hypothetical case will provide a perspective of just how the concept of "no call" works. In a baseball game, the batter hits a sharp ground ball to the shortstop, who fields it and makes an easy-to-handle throw to the first baseman for a routine, and what appears to be uncontested, out. However, in the process, the first base umpire detects what no one else saw. The first baseman removed his foot from the bag split seconds before the ball entered his mitt. It can be argued that the first baseman was only clearing the baseline so as not to obstruct the on-coming runner who appeared to be out by a good half stride. The applicable rule here is clear: the first baseman must have the ball in his control before he removes his foot from the bag. However, the batter clearly did not get a hit and the early removal of the first baseman's foot from the bag was only to avoid any possible collision with the oncoming base runner. In view of the circumstances, in most leagues such a technicality would be regarded as a "no call," and overlooked. Calling the runner safe in an instance such as this is an act of overofficiating.

It should be clearly understood that the intent of this section is not to explain what is or is not a "no call." Rather it is to acquaint the reader with this important but undocumented aspect of sports officiating. A clear concept of "no call" may take years of officiating

to master, and its mastery is a mark of journeyman-level job performance.

Anyone making a serious attempt to master the technology of sports officiating is well advised to begin with the study of the "Comments on the Rules" section of the rules books. The unit titled Basic Principles is a guide for administering sports officiating rules. In this section of the rules, rules interpreters find their authority for making "no calls."

Football official Rick Hanna tossses his flag to signal an infraction has occurred. Hand and voice signals will follow. It is important for the sports official to know exactly how to make such a call—but it is equally important to know when calls should not be made.
Photo by Bob Messina.

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Since most "no calls" have to do with contact situations, it is well to review just how the rules books treat that issue. In addressing the subject of incidental contact in basketball, for example, the rules book sets three cardinal principles which have become the legal basis for most "no calls."

- The mere fact that contact occurs does not constitute an infraction of the rules.
- Even though it may be violent, contact that is entirely incidental to an effort by an opponent to reach a loose ball or that may result when opponents are in equally favorable positions to perform normal defensive or offensive movements should not be considered illegal.
- Contact that does not hinder the opponent from participating in normal defensive or offensive movement should be treated as incidental.

The following is a list of situations wherein ignoring infractions and allowing play to continue will contribute to the spirit of competition by avoiding unnecessary disruption of play.

- The infraction can be ignored without objection or without placing either team at a disadvantage.
- A call would have the effect of penalizing the team that was violated by the incidental infraction.
- A call would serve no purpose other than to note that an infraction had occurred.
- A call would violate a long-standing tradition and understanding by players, coaches, and others as to how the game is to be played.
- A noncorrectable error has occurred.
- A correctable error has occurred, but the game has progressed beyond the point where a legal correction can be made.
- Late calls where neither team has gained an advantage and a new play situation has already developed.
- Incidental infractions are committed simultaneously and neither team gains an advantage.
- An apparent infraction has occurred, but the official does not know what, if any, penalty to assess.

CHAPTER 6

The Employment Picture

It's a Great Job and You Can Get It!

ONE IMPORTANT FACTOR WHICH BODES PARTICULARLY WELL for the future of sports officiating is the ballooning number of organized sports leagues that are demanding well-trained officials. However, because there are few if any apprenticeship programs (other than the one outlined in this text in Chapter 8), new officials are free to enter the profession at any level at which they can get game assignments.

Choosing the proper entry-level league is important and should be done only after a serious analysis of one's compatibility and professional competence at that particular level. To assist aspiring sports officials in identifying the leagues best suited to their individual skill and knowledge level, this chapter is devoted to identifying and discussing the vast array of league options open to officials at all levels.

City Recreation and Industrial Leagues

Of all the possible levels at which to enter the officiating profession, the city recreation and industrial leagues are among the easiest for which to qualify and are best suited for early success. There is a warning, however! They are also frequently the graveyard of once ambitious officials who aspired to careers as high school and college league officials.

Often city and industrial league officials who are not members of a professional association tend to apply a loose interpretation to rules relative to player conduct and bench decorum. And, with few

exceptions, floor mechanics, if they are applied at all, are highly personalized. As a result, protracted exposures to what is sometimes referred to as "jungle ball" in these leagues can lead officials to develop unorthodox officiating that will have to be unlearned in the academic leagues.

City and industrial leagues are frequently managed by an employee of the parks and recreation service whose first priority is seldom that of searching for quality officials. For new officials just starting out, this can be an advantage. It allows those with even the most marginal officiating skills to earn up to $80 per night as a first year official.

Most cities with a population of 40,000 or more will almost certainly have organized sports leagues. Frequently, cities hire their own officials directly without the assistance of professional sports officials associations.

The advantages of working directly for the city are:

1. No probation or training period
2. No membership fees
3. No pregame or postgame conferences
4. Games require less time
5. More games
6. Less stringent requirements relative to dress and officiating mechanics.

Although officials who work city or industrial leagues are occasionally looked upon unfavorably by some, the work can be every bit as exciting and profitable as officiating high school sports. For example, what is lost in a lower per game salary (usually about one half the equivalent of varsity high school games) can be made up by working more games per night.

Working the extra games is made possible by the fact that most city league games are played with a running clock, that is, the clock is not stopped for dead balls. In order to stay on schedule, league administrators will place a time limit on each contest.

City leagues can be excellent places to start an officiating career because of the number of games an official is able to work. It is not unusual for an active city league official to call 10 to 12 games per week. By comparison, a rookie high school official will be lucky to get two junior varsity games each week.

The heavy scheduling of city leagues also provides officials with an excellent opportunity to stay in top physical condition and to perfect their mechanics.

It needs to be stressed, however, that while these opportunities are indeed present, they are by no means automatic. Officials should always be mindful of the fact that practice makes "perma-

nent" rather than "perfect." If one wishes to perfect officiating skills, discipline and concentration on developing good habits are required. Such discipline is not always easy in the city leagues where standards are often lax, thereby making it easy to acquire sloppy and unconventional habits that could inhibit advancement into the more advanced leagues.

Conditions Relevant to Sports Officiating in City Recreation and Industrial Leagues

ADVANTAGES

Minimum qualifications for employment
Minimum uniform requirements
Pregame conferences not required
Few, if any, officials conferences to attend
Shorter games
More games
Greater scheduling flexibility

DISADVANTAGES

Conduct of players more difficult to control
Lower per game salary
Working with less skilled officials
Less opportunity to perfect game mechanics
Poor crowd control
May inhibit career development

Career Profile for City Recreation and Industrial Leagues

Types of sports	Basketball, baseball, softball, soccer, other sports
Salary range (per game)	$12 to $25
Experience requirement	None to two years
Employment prospects	In large cities, a sure thing!
Games per night	Two to four
Games per week	Four to eight
Rules	Usually modified high school and college
Gender	Excellent opportunities for both men and women
Mechanics	Usually not stressed

How to contact assigning official: Call or write city offices and ask for director of leisure services.

Church and Social Leagues

Church and social leagues provide a readily available training ground for anyone who wishes to gain experience before seeking assignments at more advanced levels of competition. Church leagues, like youth leagues, are particularly well-suited for teenage and young adult officials who can be developing their officiating skills while they are still playing in the high school or junior college leagues. Since high school and junior college players are ineligible to officiate in the leagues where they play, church and social leagues offer an excellent alternative workplace.

Interestingly, the world's most comprehensive basketball program in terms of numbers of participants is run by churches in conjunction with their recreation programs. The leaders in this field are the Catholic Church and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormon). For officials living in a metropolitan area of any size in the Rocky Mountains or western part of the United States there will be no problem in finding a Mormon league. Catholic leagues can be found in practically any large city throughout the country.

Opportunities for assignment in the church leagues are plentiful and the skill requirements at entry level are virtually nonexistent.

The bad news is that salaries for officials are commensurate with the skill levels. The real benefit an official can derive from these leagues is to test his or her aptitude and tolerance for this type of work before committing to the more competitive leagues.

Conditions Relevant to Sports Officiating in Social and Church Leagues

ADVANTAGES

Assignments are easy to get
No association fees
Little if any startup cost
You may work these leagues while still in your youth
Usually good crowd control

DISADVANTAGES

Experience gained in these leagues is of little value in the more advanced leagues
Likelihood of developing poor officiating mechanics
Almost no opportunity to work with veteran officials who might serve as role models
Very poor skills level on the part of both players and officials
Very poor support systems
Very seldom is there a qualified rules interpreter

Career Profile for Church and Social Leagues

Types of sports	Softball, basketball, baseball, soccer, volleyball, etc.
Salary range (per game)	$0 to $15
Experience requirement	Little to none
Employment possibilities	Good
Games per night	One or two
Games per week	Two to four
Rules	National Federation of State High School Associations
Gender	Usually male
Mechanics	Standard two man

How to contact assigning official: Call activities director at larger churches in your area. Many churches, particularly Catholic and Mormon, have large basketball programs and are frequently looking for officials.

Youth Leagues

A great thing about being a professional sports official is that one does not have to wait until adulthood to get started. There are plenty of elementary leagues, such as the various instructional leagues and Catholic Youth Leagues, that hire high school age individuals to officiate their games.

These leagues are ideal places for the neophyte official to tie into a networking system of sports officials. Many high school and college coaches are also involved in little league activities either because they have children on the teams or because they have program administration responsibilities. This makes the little leagues exceptionally well-suited for young officials to gain valuable recognition at a tender age.

Never underestimate the intensity of these games. With few exceptions neither players nor coaches hold anything back when victory is at stake. Working with youth leagues will certainly provide an opportunity for an official to prove his or her skills under fire.

Learning the rules and officiating mechanics while still a teenager can be a real career enhancement for a young official who wants to seek assignments in the adult leagues. However, youth leagues are not the exclusive province of teenage officials. More than one good adult first officiated in the youth leagues and then moved up to college officiating.

For example, a parent with a youngster who is ready to enter little league might wisely consider making it a joint endeavor. With a little

extra-effort, the parent can start his/her own career as an official while encouraging the child as a player. Since, as a supportive parent they have to learn the rules and the savvy of the game anyway, why not do it with a vested interest and build a career as an official?

Don't underestimate the little leagues as a place where you can meet the right people and showcase your skills. Many little leagues are extremely well managed by people who earn their living as coaches, athletic directors, or sports announcers at the more advanced levels of the trade.

Conditions Relevant to Sports Officiating in Youth Leagues

ADVANTAGES

Few, if any, qualifications for employment
Minimum uniform requirement
No pregame conferences
Few, if any, officials meetings to attend
Shorter games
More games to work
Greater scheduling flexibility

DISADVANTAGES

Poor qualifying experience when applying for high school or college assignments
Exceedingly poor salary
Working with less skilled officials
Little opportunity to perfect game mechanics
Often rules are significantly modified
Uncertain crowd control
Rarely will the league have a rules interpreter
Dressing facilities are rarely available

Career Profile for Youth Leagues

Types of sports	All major sports and others
Salary range (per game)	$0 to $12
Experience requirement	None
Employment possibilities	Marginal
Games per night	Two to four
Games per week	Four to eight
Rules	Modified high school
Gender	Male and female
Mechanics	Standard, but usually not emphasized

How to contact assigning official: Call city recreation department, YW and YMCA, and youth organizations.

Private and Parochial High School Leagues

During the past quarter of a century, a whole host of privately endowed secondary schools have sprung up across the country. These are in addition to the already comprehensive system of parochial schools that grew up in our nation right alongside the public schools. The parochial and private schools offer sports officials yet another excellent opportunity to ply their skills and increase their earnings.

Although the level of competition at these schools is often equal or superior to that in the public schools, they are frequently overlooked by officials casting about for assignments. Therefore, new officials who lack connections often find games easier to schedule in those associations serving the parochial and private school leagues.

Another point not to be overlooked is that frequently the nonpublic schools play on nights when the public schools traditionally do not have games. Typically, public high schools in a particular region will all play their games on the same nights of the week; for instance, Tuesday and Friday are common game nights. If an official can find a parochial league in the same area that plays on Wednesdays and Saturdays, it is possible that he or she will be able to increase earnings by working both leagues with twice as many opportunities to schedule games.

Conditions Relevant to Sports Officiating in Parochial and Private High School Leagues

ADVANTAGES

The schools may be overlooked by others, thus creating increased job opportunities
Excellent training ground for other high school leagues or college leagues
As in most smaller leagues, it is easier to gain recognition
Good crowd control

DISADVANTAGES

In many rural parts of the country employment opportunities are limited
Schools may be scattered over an extensive area
In many smaller schools, the practice of blacklisting can become a problem.

Career Profile for the Parochial and Private High School Leagues

Type of sports	Smaller schools often have abbreviated sports programs but most will have basketball and softball
Salary Range (per game)	$20 to $50 per game
Experience requirement	Three to five years
Employment possibilities	Good in large metropolitan areas
Games per night	One or two
Games per week	Two to four
Rules	National Federation of State High School Associations
Gender	Male and female
Mechanics	Highly skilled

How to contact assigning official: Call individual schools. Check Yellow Pages for a list in your area.

Military Intramural Leagues

Officials searching for an entry level league who live near a military installation will be pleased to learn of the excellent employment opportunities at these facilities. Some of the larger military installations have very comprehensive sports programs with as many as five or more games being played on any given night. Military teams consist of the base team (varsity) and an array of intramural teams.

Because most sports officials when looking for assignments gravitate toward civilian schools and city leagues, the field of competition for military games is less crowded. As with the city and industrial leagues, assurance to the assigning official that one knows the rules is frequently all the qualification required for officiating in the intramural level of military leagues.

An important value-added feature of military leagues is that officials who are otherwise inexperienced in working with adults can gain exposure to this more advanced age group of athletes. As most veteran officials will agree, the transition from working with youth to working with adults is a major one, and sometimes requires a great deal of readjustment. The fact is that many officials who are outstanding technicians and enjoy excellent rapport with youth are unable to cope in the adult leagues. It is important to recognize that the differences between youth and adult leagues extend beyond the players themselves.

The coaches encountered in the intramural military leagues will often have a style similar to their college counterparts. What's more, military teams, more than just being older than high school teams, will frequently include players with university level experience. Many of the military intramural teams will include college and university level schools in their nonleague schedule, which is an excellent way of gaining valuable experience officiating at the university level.

Conditions Relevant to Sports Officiating in Military Leagues

ADVANTAGES

Assignments are often easy to get
Excellent opportunity for new officials to perfect their skills
Games are usually played in same locale, thereby reducing commute to games
Frequently there is no association fee required
Excellent opportunity for inexperienced officials to gain experience in working with mature age groups

DISADVANTAGES

Limited opportunity to gain exposure to high school and college level programs
There is tendency to develop lax mechanics
Some officials associations are hesitating to give credit for experience gained in military leagues
The caliber of officiating is not always as high as that found in the high school and college associations
Rules interpreters are usually nonexistent

Career Profile for the Military Leagues

	Varsity	*Intramural*
Salary range (per game)	$25.00 to $100.00	$10.00 to $25.00
Experience requirement ...	High school or intramural	Entry level
Games per night	One or two	Two to four
Games per week	Two to four	Four to eight
Skill level of teams	High school through college	High school junior varsity through varsity
Rules	International or NCAA	Modified NCAA

Career Advancement	High school or college	Base varsity or high school junior varsity
Gender	Primarily male	Primarily male
Mechanics	International or NCAA	Not stressed

How to contact assigning official: Call general information and ask for post locater at the military base where you wish to officiate. The post locater can direct you to the recreation specialist, who will provide you with detailed information about employment on the base as a sports official.

Women's High School and College Leagues

Perhaps one of the best kept secrets in all of sports officiating is the remarkable success that thousands of sports officials are experiencing in women's high school and college leagues. With salaries for a single college basketball game ranging as high as $300 in postseason tournaments, this is a potential for officiating that should not be overlooked.

The good news is that officials associations that service these leagues, with few exceptions, maintain an open membership policy. Anyone who can demonstrate the appropriate level of officiating skills will be assigned games. Women's leagues are grossly undersold in the male dominated fraternity of sports officiating. Men seem instinctively drawn by an ego satisfaction into the men's leagues. This compulsion has a positive effect of creating excellent job opportunities in women's leagues for good officials who feel that their careers are being placed on hold in the more crowded men's leagues.

Some male officials are driven by the excitement of working men's leagues, which takes them into the major forums and before larger crowds. Such ego enrichment is certainly one of the recognized amenities of officiating. This fact notwithstanding, it makes good sense to forego some of the ego benefits in order to beef up earning power and speed up career development by working in women's sports.

Opportunities for female officials are particularly good in the women's leagues. Although the total number of male officials still dwarfs the number of women, it is becoming more common to see a female officiating.

The women's leagues also offer an exceptional opportunity to break into the junior college and four year college ranks. In many

An ever-increasing number of organized sports leagues are demanding well-trained officials. A vast array of officiating opportunities invite aspiring sports officials to find the option that best suits their skills and knowledge level. Women's sports leagues provide one of the fastest growing opportunities for officiating.
Photo courtesy Amateur Softball Association.

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instances, officials for these leagues are assigned by independent associations that have no affiliation with local men's leagues. This can open up some excellent job opportunities which smart up and coming officials can seize upon.

Frequently, it's easier to get assignments at the college level in the women's leagues than at the high school level. This is because, as a rule at the high school level, the officials association will contract to assign both men and women's games. This arrangement usually means that the established officials wind up working all of the varsity games. This comes about because high school coaches for the women's teams usually insist that the number of major officials assigned to the respective men's and women's teams remain equal. The ultimate result is that, at this level, a few select officials monopolize varsity games, thereby inhibiting the advancement opportunities for less experienced officials.

Women's college leagues, however, offer an unequalled opportunity to accelerate advancement into the ranks of college officials. There is little, if any, loss of compensation in working women's leagues. The salary scale for women's college leagues will usually begin at $50 per game and range up to $150 for university level games.

The way to get in touch with the assigning officials for the women's college leagues is to contact the women's coaches or athletic directors of the colleges in your area.

Conditions Relevant to Sports Officiating
Women's High School and College Leagues

ADVANTAGES

If you are already involved in men's leagues, it is easy to enrich your schedule by expanding into the women's program
For female officials, the acceptance quotient is unquestionably higher
Overall coach and player demeanor is a plus in women's leagues
The number of officials vying for assignments is not as great as in male leagues
Excellent crowd control

DISADVANTAGES

There are still many leagues around the country that persist in a lower pay scale for women's leagues
Women's leagues often do not afford as much exposure to fans, potential employers, or the press as do men's leagues.
It is possible to become stereotyped as a women's official only, thereby losing credibility as a men's official.

Career Profile for Women's High School and College Leagues

	College level	*High school level*
Type of Sports	Volleyball, basketball, softball, track, and tennis	Same
Salary Range (per game)	$35 to $300	$15 to $45
Experience Requirement	High school or junior college	Junior varsity officials clinic
Employment Outlook	Highly competitive	Very good
Games per night	One	One or two
Games per week	One or two	Two to four
Rules	Typically NCAA	National Federation but may vary
Mechanics	Varies greatly	Varies greatly

How to contact assigning official: Contact athletic director or coach at any school with a women's team and request instructions for contacting the individual responsible for assigning games to officials.

Public High School Leagues

The high school leagues within the public sector are by far the biggest employers of sports officials in the country. They are also the most popular place for officials to develop and showcase their professional skills.

The high level of interest that officials express for these leagues creates ideal conditions for the classic supply and demand situation. Assignments to high school varsity games, particularly men's games, often prove to be a difficult commodity to obtain.

Although it's an obvious contradiction, the best experience for a new official trying to establish him or herself at the high school varsity level is to have officiated high school varsity games before. The solution to this seemingly "Catch 22" dilemma is to volunteer for preseason scrimmage games.

Since few, if any, schools are funded for hiring officials for the scrimmage games, coaches are usually more than happy to have the services of a volunteer official. This affords new officials an excellent opportunity to practice their skills and gain some visibility with coaches and athletic directors throughout the leagues. As a

new official, you will be serving yourself well to sign up for as many of these practice games as possible.

In most parts of the country at the high school level officials are expected to work both men's and women's games. And, with some exceptions, these each have their own set of rules. While some coaches might prefer to work only men's games or only women's games, this is not a good career move.

It would be wise for the neophyte official not to show a preference for either men's or women's games and to demonstrate the same enthusiasm for officiating at both. Coaches are sometimes too preoccupied during their own games to adequately evaluate the officials but they can do this more thoroughly while sitting in the stands watching another team play. Any indication of unenthusastic officiating performance could cause coaches to scratch the offending new official from their list of "acceptables."

Conditions Relevant to Sports Officiating in Public High School Leagues

ADVANTAGES

Player demeanor is usually good
Dressing rooms are usually provided for officials
Salaries are usually good
Opportunity to gain experience in working in front of a crowd
Opportunity to work with experienced officials, including some with college level experience
Excellent preparation for a move into college level ranks
Opportunity to be evaluated by quality evaluators
Excellent crowd control

DISADVANTAGES

Often required to work free scrimmage games
Often required to attend association meetings
Less control over your own schedule than in lower leagues
Fewer games than in the lower ranking leagues

Career Profile for Public High School Leagues

Types of sports ..... All sports
Salary range (per game) ..... $15 to $50
Experience requirement ..... Three to five years
Employment possibilities ..... Good, but competitive
Games per night ..... One to two
Games per week ..... One to four

Rules ..... National Federation of State High School Associations
Gender ..... Men and women
Mechanics ..... Standard excellence demanded

How to contact assigning officials: Contact high school coach or athletic director and ask for the names and telephone numbers of the assigning officials.

College and University Leagues

For those who are not already convinced that officiating can be a highly profitable endeavor, here is a fact that should brighten your day and lay to rest any persisting doubts. During the 1991-92 season, the per-game salary for officiating men's basketball in the Pac Ten Conference was a hefty $375 plus travel and per diem.

The exciting thing is that achieving status as a university level official is a realistic objective for any hardworking, competitive, serious minded sports official. In addition to the lucrative financial rewards to be realized, attaining this milestone ensures membership in an elite group of professional athletes.

After completion of the apprenticeship program outlined in this book, the official will find a whole host of four-year colleges and universities at which to officiate—over 1,500 in the United States alone. While few conferences can equal the salaries of the Pac Ten, most will offer a salary that, when stated in terms of an hourly wage, compares favorably with other professions.

Conditions Relevant to Sports Officiating College and University Leagues

ADVANTAGES

Excellent salary
Excellent work environment
Opportunity to work with the best officials in the profession
Excellent rules interpreters
Good crowd control
Excellent dressing facilities

DISADVANTAGES

Heavy scrutiny by media
Frequent travel
Restricts the number of games that you are available to work
Limited advancement opportunity

Career Profile for College and University Leagues

Salary range (per game) ..... $50 to $500*
Experience requirement ..... High school/junior college
Employment possibilities ..... Highly competitive
Games per night ..... One
Games per week ..... One to two
Rules ..... NCAA
Gender ..... Women and men
Mechanics ..... Two to three man

How to contact assigning officials: Call or write commissioner of officials for respective conference.

Study and analyze carefully the vast array of career options highlighted in the preceding pages and then make your individual career development plan accordingly. Plan wisely so that your initial experiences as a sports official will be successful and lead to advancements.

*Tournament pay

CHAPTER 7

Official Business

The Best Way to Make a Career Last Is to Put Business First!

SPORTS OFFICIATING CAN BE PROFITABLE WHEN PURSUED IN a businesslike fashion, even if it is only on a part-time basis. It permits an individual to become a two profession person, since there are few careers that are not compatible with that of sports officiating.

Because it is almost always practiced as a second profession, sports officiating has the highly desirable effect of creating a proportionately high amount of disposable income. Perhaps more than anything else, sports officiating is set apart from other part-time ventures by its high degree of respectability. Most professional people aren't opposed to the idea of moonlighting to enrich the family coffers as long as their dignity is not compromised.

Sports officiating also fits perfectly into the new wave of entrepreneurship popular among upwardly mobile people. Increasingly, the profit-oriented concepts of entrepreneurship have found application in virtually every industry and profession. The sports officials profession has been no exception to this trend. In recent years, entrepreneur-minded officials have helped bring about two major changes within the world of sports officiating.

First, many officials who had for years been treating sports officiating simply as a hobby have now come to realize that by applying sound business practices, they can literally cash in on their sports officiating skills. Officiating has become better as a consequence.

Second, there is an ever growing number of related businesses springing up whose clientele is comprised almost entirely of sports officials. These new ventures include publishing materials aimed at

Sports officials can enhance career development by working two or more sports or by taking on various assignments in competitive events. Rose Bowl football official Les Bruckner also officiates water polo and, as seen here, serves as a swim starter.
Photo by Bob Messina.

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sports officials, clinics, and retail shops offering uniforms for sports officials plus such services as rules interpreters and commissioners of officials for various leagues, to mention a few.

Many officials are still reluctant to treat their officiating activities as a business. The difficulty in establishing a business is often overestimated. However, there are no definitive requirements or criteria a person must meet in order to declare themselves in business. While there are many types of businesses that require licensing or are closely regulated by various governmental agencies, this is not the case with sports officiating.

It is simple to transform officiating activities into a business. All that is necessary is for the individual to declare his or her intention to operate as a business.

According to research reported by the U.S. Small Business Administration, the characteristics that appear most frequently among successful small business managers are drive, thinking ability, competence in human relations, communication skills, and technical knowledge in their field—the same characteristics that are part of the makeup of any successful sports official.

The SBA rating scale shown here indicates traits important to success as a business proprietor. If the answers in the first column accurately describe how you operate, then you have the qualities to make your sports officiating business a success.

Sports officials should not be reluctant to become actively engaged in the business aspects of their profession in the mistaken belief that this is something unrelated that requires unfamiliar skills and qualifications. The scale clearly reveals a high correlation between individuals with a high aptitude for sports officiating and those with a high aptitude for business.

Sports officials who decide to upgrade their business management methods from a kitchen calendar operation to a more sophisticated business approach will find the following check list for start-up businesses to be a helpful guideline.

- Design and have printed personalized business cards.
- Design and have printed personalized letterhead stationery.
- Set up a special bank account for officiating activities.
- Develop a set of books and records for officiating activities.
- Consult with a tax adviser relative to best tax strategies.
- Develop an informational file on clients and prospective clients.
- Develop an action plan for contacting and selling your services to prospective clients.
- Devise a method of securing feedback from clients. Develop plan for future growth.

Rating Scale for Personal Traits Important to a Business Proprietor

Scale Published by Small Business Administration

Instructions: Read each question. Place a check mark on the line above at the point closest to your answer. The check mark need not be placed directly over one of the suggested answers if your rating lies somewhere between two answers. Be honest with yourself.

Are You a Self-Starter?	I do things my own way. Nobody needs to tell me to get going.	If someone gets me started, I keep going all right.	Easy does it. I don't put myself out until I have to.
How Do You Feel About Other People?	I like people. I can get along with just about anybody.	I have enough friends and I don't need anybody else.	Most people bug me.
Can You Lead Others?	I can get most people to go along with me without much difficulty.	I can get people to do things if I drive them.	I usually let someone else get things moving.
Can You Take Responsibility?	I like to take charge and see things through.	I'll take over if I have to, but I'd rather let someone else be responsible.	There's always some eager beaver around waiting to show off. I say, let him.

How Good an Organizer Are You?	I like to have a plan before I start. I'm usually the one who lines things up.	I do all right unless things get too complicated. Then I may cop out.	I just take things as they come.
How Good a Worker Are You?	I can keep working as long as necessary. I don't mind working hard.	I'll work hard for a time, but when I've had enough, that's it!	I can't see that hard work gets you anywhere.
Can You Make Decisions?	I can make up my mind in a hurry if necessary, and my decision is usually O.K.	I can if I have plenty of time. If I have to make up my mind fast, I usually regret it.	I don't like to be the one who decides things. I'd probably blow it.
Can People Trust What You Say?	They sure can. I don't say things I don't mean.	I try to be on the level, but sometimes I just say what's easiest.	What's the sweat if the other fellow doesn't know the difference?
Can You Stick With It?	If I make up my mind to do something, I don't let anything stop me.	I usually finish what I start.	If a job doesn't go right, I turn off. Why beat your brains out?
Can You Keep Records?	Since they are needed I'll keep records even though I don't want to.	I can, but it's more important to get the work out than to shuffle numbers.	I would rather hire an accountant to keep records for me.

- Develop a resume delineating the professional service to be offered.
- Develop an annual budget itemizing such things as uniforms, publications, rules books, training, and travel.
- Take advantage of the numerous businessman discounts that are offered by the various officials organizations.

Officials can increase the income they receive by expanding into related business activities. Such activities might include conducting rules clinics, serving as supervisor of officials, conducting mechanics clinics, operating sales outlets for officials supplies, and publishing materials related to sports officiating. By actively reaching out with a business purpose in mind, the hobby of sports officiating can be expanded into a thriving business

CHAPTER 8

Apprenticeship Program for Sports Officials

THERE ARE NO CERTIFICATION STANDARDS TO GUIDE BEGINning sports officials through a bona fide training program leading to journeyman status. The responsibility, therefore, is left in the hands of each new official to create and monitor his/her own individual apprenticeship program.

Being unstructured and for the most part unregulated, the sports officiating profession is easy enough to enter, but very difficult to survive in beyond the entry level. The age old admonishment, "It's not as easy as it looks," is very appropriate.

Before a new official embarks upon a training program, it will serve him/her well to correct another time-accepted adage, the one that states, "Practice makes perfect." "Practice" won't always make perfect; however, it will make "permanent." The critical point is that the training program an official commits to must be one of such fidelity that it will protect the individual against developing bad officiating habits that will take valuable time and rigid discipline to correct farther down the road.

To help the beginner avoid some of the pitfalls and career setbacks on the road to officiating, the following training development guide has been assembled as a model for new officials and their supervisors to use when designing individual internships.

The apprenticeship year begins in July. This timing permits new officials to enter the training cycle immediately following the close of the school year, thereby allowing the maximum training time before the start of the first season as a working official.

Syllabus of Apprenticeship Phases

This apprenticeship program for high school and college level sports officials is designed to be conducted over a period of four years. Each year of the apprenticship training is comprised of four separate phases making a total of sixteen phases for the entire apprenticeship program.

PHASE I —Planning and Training Activities (Off Season)
150 to 170 days

PHASE II —Preseason and Nonconference Contests
30 to 60 days

PHASE III—Regular Season and Playoff Contests
90 to 105 days

PHASE IV—Postseason Wrap-Up
30 days

There is nothing sacred or immutable about the above time frames. They are meant only as a management tool. Interns and their supervisors will alter and personalize them to fit their own particular needs and circumstances.

The individual phases will usually coincide with different months of the year. Each sport has its own season and the apprenticeship activities calendar for each sport must be arranged accordingly. Officials who are working more than one sport will, of course, be in different phases of two or more apprenticeship programs at the same time. For example, an individual who is interning in both football and baseball will in all likelihood be in Phase I of the football program while at the same time in Phase III or IV of the baseball program.

APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM GUIDE FOR SPORTS OFFICIALS

First Year—Phase I

Name _____

Sport _____

Starting Date _____
Ending Date _____

Performance Objective	Completion Date	Certifying Official
1. Join local sports officials association.	_____	_____
2. Meet with commissioner of officials, agree upon an internship program.	_____	_____
3. Under direction of physician, begin or continue physical fitness program.	_____	_____
4. Organize a system for maintaining schedules and records.	_____	_____
5. Develop career objectives that reflect the highest level at which candidate plans to officiate.	_____	_____
6. Acquire and study rules book and officials manual.	_____	_____
7. Purchase top of the line equipment and apparel.	_____	_____
8. Successfully participate in a professionally organized sports officials' training clinic.	_____	_____

First Year—Phase II

Name _____

Sport _____

Starting Date _____
Ending Date _____

	Completion Date	Certifying Official
1. Become informed about the particulars of the local sports officials association. Concentrate on learning a) Names of key people b) Association's bylaws c) Location of gyms d) Arrival times for games e) dress standards.	_____	_____
2. If the test is published for the respective sports, pass Part I of the National Federation of State High School Associations rules examination by a score of at least 80 percent.	_____	_____
3. Before first game, spend at least two hours practicing hand signals and game mechanics.	_____	_____
4. Contact coaches and assigning officials and volunteer to work preseason scrimmage games.	_____	_____
5. Attend officials' associations preseason officials' clinic.	_____	_____

First Year—Phase III

Name _____

Sport _____

Starting Date _____
Ending Date _____

	Completion Date	Certifying Official
1. Work twice the number of games per week that the athletes normally play, e.g., two football or four basketball games (to achieve this objective may mean accepting low paying games in the industrial and/or church leagues).	_____	_____
2. During first year, concentrate on rules interpretation. Mechanics will become more essential at the high school varsity and college level.	_____	_____
3. If the sport requires the use of a timing device, serve as a timer on at least one game.	_____	_____
4. Arrange for major officials to observe your work and provide feedback on at least three contests.	_____	_____
5. Concentrate on learning the duties of one particular officiating position, e.g., umpire in basketball or line judge in football.	_____	_____
6. Observe from the stands at least 6 quarters of basketball, 12 innings of baseball, or comparable periods in other sports.	_____	_____
7. Attend all meetings sponsored by local sports officials associations during the year.	_____	_____

First Year—Phase IV

Name _____

Sport _____

Starting Date _____
Ending Date _____

	Completion Date	Certifying Official
1. Play an active role in postseason activities (e.g., volunteer to serve on ad hoc committee of local sports officials association).	_____	_____
2. With adviser, review the progress made during the previous season.	_____	_____
3. Write out personal objectives for the coming season.	_____	_____
4. Develop personal resume detailing the developomental experiences and professional accomplishments of the past season.	_____	_____

Second Year—Phase I

Name _____

Sport _____

Starting Date _____
Ending Date _____

	Completion Date	Certifying Official
1. Inventory equipment and apparel. Replace where needed. Upgrade when possible.	_____	_____
2. Update system for maintaining schedules and record keeping.	_____	_____
3. Set forth career objectives for the coming season.	_____	_____
4. Continue physical fitness program.	_____	_____
5. Acquire officials manual for coming season.	_____	_____
6. Stay involved in off-season activities. Work off-season leagues or officiate in another sport.	_____	_____
7. Update personal resume showing the past season's experience and forward to all associations where there is a possibility of working during the coming season.	_____	_____
4. Purchase and study rules books containing rules changes for upcoming season.	_____	_____
5. Design and have printed a personalized business card.	_____	_____

Second Year— Phase II

Name _____

Sport _____

Starting Date _____
Ending Date _____

	Completion Date	Certifying Official
1. Pass Part II of the National Federation of State High School Associations Rules Examination by scoring a minimum of 80 percent correct. (Repeat each year.)	_____	_____
2. Contact coaches and assigning officials at the high school varsity level and volunteer to work scrimmage games. Work at least two preseason scrimmages.	_____	_____
3. Before first contest, practice hand signals, games mechanics, and any appropriate ball handling techniques for three hours in 15-minute sessions.	_____	_____
4. If available, arrange to view and discuss the current edition of the video on rules produced by the National Federation of State High School Associations.	_____	_____
5. Attend respective officials association's preseason meetings.	_____	_____

Second Year—Phase III

Name _____

Sport _____

Starting Date _____
Ending Date _____

	Completion Date	Certifying Official
1. From the stands, observe at least 6 quarters of basketball or the equivalent for contests not played in quarters worked by senior officials.	_____	_____
2. Continue to concentrate on perfecting skills at a particular position such as umpire behind the plate or line man.	_____	_____
3. Work at least three games per week (one game per week for football officials) and ensure that at least one of those games is at the high school junior varsity level or above.	_____	_____
4. Serve as scorer for at least one game.	_____	_____
5. Arrange for a major official to observe your officiating and provide feedback on at least two games.	_____	_____

Second Year—Phase IV

Name _____

Sport _____

Starting Date _____
Ending Date _____

	Completion Date	Certifying Official
1. File postseason reports, e.g., officials evaluations, pay vouchers.	_____	_____
2. Meet with association supervisor to assess job performance of past season	_____	_____
3. Play an active role in postseason activities.	_____	_____
4. Review with mentor the objectives established established prior to the beginning of the season. Adjust and follow up as necessary.	_____	_____
5. Update personal resume detailing professional accomplishments of the past season.	_____	_____

Third Year—Phase I

Name _____

Sport _____

Starting Date _____
Ending Date _____

	Completion Date	Certifying Official
1. Inventory equipment and uniform. Replace where needed. Upgrade when necessary.	_____	_____
2. Update system for maintaining schedules and recordkeeping.	_____	_____
3. Maintain a good physical conditioning program.	_____	_____
4. Set career objectives for the coming season.	_____	_____
5. Acquire rules book and officials manual for coming season.	_____	_____

Third Year—Phase II

Name _____

Sport _____

Starting Date _____
Ending Date _____

	Completion Date	Certifying Official
1. Stay involved in off-season activities by working off-season leagues or officiating in another sport.	_____	_____
2. Purchase and study rules and case books containing changes for upcoming season.	_____	_____
3. Update personal resume and forward to appropriate sports officials association.	_____	_____
4. Spend at least two hours per week studying and practicing mechanics.	_____	_____
5. Spend at least one hour per week studying the responsibilities of the crew chief official.	_____	_____
6. If applicable, devote at least one hour per week to becoming familiar with the differences in rules of the game for men and for women.	_____	_____
7. Contact coaches and assigning officials at junior college level and volunteer to work scrimmage games. Do at least two scrimmages.	_____	_____
8. Spend at least 12 hours indexing and cross referencing rules book, case book and simplified and illustrated rules.	_____	_____
9. Attend respective officials association pre-season meetings.	_____	_____

10. Develop an outline to be used in pregame discussions when serving as referee. _____ _____

11. Before first game, practice hand signals and reporting techniques for two hours in 15-minute sessions. _____ _____

An important part of the officiating apprenticeship program is to build proper attitudes and sound habits of maintaining equipment, uniform, and physical conditioning. Being prepared means staying physically fit and keeping all your officiating properties in top condition, both in-season and during off-season.
Photo courtesy Cliff Keen Athletic Sox and Jox.

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Third Year—Phase III

Name _____

Sport _____

Starting Date _____
Ending Date _____

	Completion Date	Certifying Official
1. Arrange for a major high school official to observe and provide feedback on at least two games.	_____	_____
2. Work a minimum of three games per week with at least one of the three being at the varsity level.	_____	_____
3. Arrange to accept different officiating responsibilities such as umpire and referee in at least four games.	_____	_____
4. From the stands, spend a minimum of six quarters or equivalent observing senior officials at the junior college level.	_____	_____

Third Year—Phase IV

Name _____

Sport _____

Starting Date _____
Ending Date _____

	Completion Date	Certifying Official
1. File postseason reports, e.g., officials evaluations, pay vouchers, etc.	_____	_____
2. Meet with association supervisor to assess results of job performance during past season.	_____	_____
3. Review objects you have established for yourself before the start of the season. Adjust and follow up where necessary	_____	_____
4. Update personal resume, detailing professional accomplishments of the past season.	_____	_____
5. Take an active role in postseason activities.	_____	_____
6. Meet with assigning officials and decide if you are ready to advance to Phase IV or continue working at Phase III level.	_____	_____

Fourth Year—Phase I

Name _____

Sport _____

Starting Date _____
Ending Date _____

	Completion Date	Certifying Official
1. Repeat prior procedures relative to equipment, uniform, physical conditioning, and record keeping.	_____	_____
2. Contact local sports officials to identify college level off-season leagues.	_____	_____
3. Formalize career objectives through coming season. Readjust long term objectives if necessary.	_____	_____

Fourth Year—Phase II

Name _____

Sport _____

Starting Date _____
Ending Date _____

	Completion Date	Certifying Official
1. Stay involved in off-season activities. Work in an off-season leagueor in another sport.	_____	_____
2. Improve marketability by spending at least 12 hours studying the rules and mechanics of some new phase of the game, e.g., international or NCAA women's rules.	_____	_____
3. If not already a member of an officials association serving junior colleges, join one.	_____	_____
4. Focus on study of NCAA rules for both men and women and develop a mastery of the NCAA college rules interpretations. Also continue study of high school rules.	_____	_____
5. Update personal resume and forward to all appropriate associations.	_____	_____
6. Develop a set of simplified procedures that officials can use as a guide for interfacing with timers and scorers.	_____	_____
7. Demonstrate a thorough knowledge of college mechanics by mastering the materials in the Collegiate Commissioners Association Officials Manual.	_____	_____

Fourth Year—Phase III

Name _____

Sport _____

Starting Date _____
Ending Date _____

	Completion Date	Certifying Official
1. Contact coaches at four-year colleges and volunteer to work scrimmages. Do at least two preseason scrimmage games.	_____	_____
2. Attend preseason session of respective sports officials association.	_____	_____
3. Inventory equipment and apparel to ensure that it is in a state of readiness and that it meets specifications of any new associations.	_____	_____
4. Incorporate new rules changes into pregame discussion notes.	_____	_____

Fourth Year—Phase IV

Name _____

Sport _____

Starting Date _____
Ending Date _____

	Completion Date	Certifying Official
1. Arrange for the assigning official from the four-year college ranks to observe work and provide feedback on performance.	_____	_____
2. Work at least two practice games at the four-year college level.	_____	_____
3. Work at least three games or equivalent per week with two being at the high school varsity level or beyond.	_____	_____
4. During the season, work at least four games at or above the junior college level	_____	_____
5. Make a presentation or write a paper on rules interpretation for use at an officials workshop.	_____	_____
6. Work at least two tournament games during the season at or above the high school varsity level.	_____	_____
7. From the stands, spend a minimum of six quarters or the equivalent in studying the performance of senior officials at the four year varsity level.	_____	_____

Fourth Year—Phase V

Name _____

Sport _____

Starting Date _____
Ending Date _____

	Completion Date	Certifying Official
1. Meet with association supervisor to review past year and plan future career development.	_____	_____
2. Broaden personal utility in the sports officiating field by undertaking a collateral activity such as rules interpreter, assigner of officials, evaluator of officials, or trainer of officials.	_____	_____
3. Update personal resume, detailing professional accomplishments from past season.	_____	_____

CHAPTER 9

Communications

FEW PROFESSIONS REQUIRE THE EXACTNESS AND DIPLOmacy in communication that sports officiating does. This observation is of particular significance because of the high stress working conditions of sports officials, created by the emotionally charged atmosphere of sports arenas. In this volatile setting, flawed communications can quickly produce catastrophic consequences.

In order to ensure that poor communication will not ruin their officiating records, aspirant sports officials must successfully incorporate no less than three fundamental language disciplines into their repertoire of information sharing skills. These three are the "Legal Language," the "Journeyman Language," and the "Signal Language" of sports officials.

As officials develop the proficiency requisite to achieving recognition as top level professionals, these basic languages become a practice that is second nature. Whatever the medium of communication, a conscientious official is always mindful of yet another factor that often speaks louder than the rest. This is the ever present, ever revealing body language.

An official's body language has a profound influence upon his or her ability to communicate effectively in any of the three languages. It has particularly profound influence upon the signal language. Anemic or languid signals convey a lack of conviction on the part of the official. Signals that are sloppy and lack concise definition are certain to create confusion and give rise to misunderstandings that will cause a disruption of the orderly flow of events. Furthermore, they may be well choreographed, but hand signals that are delivered in a terse and obtrusive manner will incite resentment of what is otherwise an outstanding call.

It is exasperating for an official to take flak for an excellent call because he or she is unable to report it in a smooth and nonprov-

ocative manner. Conversely, by maintaining composure and exhibiting positive body language, an official who has made tough or questionable calls is often able to allay the inflamed emotions of an outraged coach and upset spectators.

Exactness is a fundamental quality that has universal application in each of the three basic language disciplines. Whether it's the legal language, visual signals, or journeyman language, exactness in expression is of paramount importance. Words such as "maybe," "perhaps," and "probably," which harbor shades of ambiguity and indecisiveness, are elements of a verboten language in the world of sports officiating.

Legal Language

The legal language discipline is contained in the official written and spoken language that has been sanctioned and codified by the rules committees representing the various sports. This official idiom is chronicled in the rules books, case books, and the other official publications of the respective sports.

To clarify and standardize the language, each rules book includes a special section entitled "Definitions." It contains a comprehensive, but by no means complete, list of words and phrases pertinent to that particular sport. Each word or phrase is followed by a brief definition or explanation.

Officials should study the definition section of the rules book and in every instance possible employ the language contained therein, during games and game-related conversations. They should avoid a practice of using colloquialisms or street jargon where the rules manuals have provided adequate legal terminology. The rule of correct language is, "If there is a legal word or expression that can be used, use it!"

Officials committed to good communications will avoid substitute terms picked up from unauthorized sources. Many individuals stereotype themselves as "hack" officials by allowing their vocabularies to become saturated with arcane and incorrect terminologies. Typical of this type of errant language practice are the terms used by some basketball personnel in lieu of the proper references found in the rules manuals. Here, for example, are a few of the most frequently misused words.

Baseline—Officials often use the term baseline when referring to the boundary line at either end of the court, which are legally designated as end lines.

Hacking—Although obsolete many years ago, the word is still used by some officials instead of the proper phrase, "illegal use of hands."

Center Line—This is an improper reference to the "division line."

Bucket—This is an an incorrect synonym for "basket."

Key—An arcane expression, this word dates back to when the free throw lane had a key-shaped configuration.

These expressions are not to be confused with journeyman language. The difference is that the words in the above listing are corruptions of the legal language. On the other hand, journeyman language is comprised totally of words and phrases that have no synonyms in the legal or signal disciplines.

By staying abreast of the proper authorized language, conscientious officials can do much to promote a strong professional image for themselves. With few exceptions, the authorized language of the officials manuals should be spoken when conversing with coaches and athletes. Always keep in mind, however, that a full mastery of the fine art of sports officiating necessarily requires an ability to converse with fellow officials in the special parlance that is referred to in this text as the journeyman language. Not knowing the journeyman language of sports officials will impede an official's growth and development as a professional.

Journeyman Language

While the legal language found in the manuals is essential to good communications skills, it by no means provides a stand-alone vocabulary. The legal language that consists of a vocabulary made up totally of words and phrases from the sanctioned manuals will not ensure a clear and thorough transfer of information in all instances. This is particularly true when it comes to discussing issues relevant to the mechanics of officiating. The ability of officials to communicate at the journeyman level entails a command of the vast array of uncodified words and phrases which have, over the years, found their way into the world of sports officiating.

Good examples of the journeyman language are terms such as "oversell," "blackballing," and "no call." None of these expressions are referenced in any of the rules books or officials manuals, but they are nonetheless terms that are germane and basic to the vocabulary of sports officiating.

While working the contest, officials can usually be counted upon to restrict their verbal communication to the legal language ex-

pressed in the authorized manuals. However, once away from the field of competition, they dispense with the usual formality and rigidity of the legal language. After hours, the language of sports officials turns to parlance much more demonstrative and job oriented.

Replete with athletic jargon and metaphor, the journeyman language permits officials to converse openly and candidly about their work. It is the language that is spoken during informal locker room discussions, pre and postgame conferences, and at regular officials meetings.

The rules books and related officials manuals are written in such hypertechnical wording that often they can only be understood by incumbent officials who possess a thorough knowledge of sports officiating. For these experienced arbiters, the official, rigid language employed in the rules manuals is relatively easy to decode. Unfortunately, the indepth understanding of these veteran officials is not shared by most beginning officials. For example, without the help of a good mentor, it frequently takes years for a new official to discover and master the concept of "no calls."

Anxious as new officials are to decipher things correctly, they tend to place a literal interpretation upon the rules. The fallacy of such a practice will not be discovered by the new official through reading the rules manuals. This knowledge comes through the process of information sharing with veteran officials and by reading trade journals. In either case, a working knowledge of the journeyman language becomes an absolute must.

To help develop a proper language background for interpreting the rules, officials should study the list of journeyman terms contained in the glossary of this text. It is a sampling of the vocabulary oriented more to the intent of the rules and less to the technical wording employed by the rules writers.

As explained in the comments section of the Basketball Rules Book, "It is important to know the intent and purpose of each rule so that it may be intelligently applied in each play situation." It is further emphasized that, "A player or a team should not be permitted an advantage which is not intended by a rule." This leaves an enormous amount of discretionary decision making authority in the hands of the officials.

In the course of explaining this basic philosophy of rules interpretation, trainers of officials have found it necessary to introduce new terms and phrases. These are not derivatives of the legal language adopted by the rules committee, but rather are legitimate instruments of verbal and written communication. This journeyman language fills some very real voids in the legal and signals languages.

Signal Language

The exactness and universality of signal language makes it extremely valuable as a communications tool. Furthermore, since signals are so animated, they significantly reduce the chances of poor communication.

Visual signals can be thought of as sort of an instant replay whereby the official graphically demonstrates the exact nature of the infraction that has just occurred. The visual signals are almost always more convincing to players, coaches, and spectators than is a verbal description.

To be effective communicators, officials have to faithfully practice the authorized signals and avoid the compulsion to offer their own improvisations. By way of illustration, it is not at all uncommon to see an untrained basketball official signal a traveling violation by shuffling his/her feet in a jitterbug like dance. The intent is to dramatize the illegal foot motion. In the mind of the official, the choreographic action more accurately demonstrates the actual infraction than does the authorized swirling of the hands signals.

The use of such unauthorized signals is poor officiating mechanics. Supervisors of officials and athletic directors are quick to take note of such unorthodox antics, and the use of personalized signals is often cited as an association's reason for keeping an official off top level games.

It is therefore imperative for career advancement minded officials to be exact in the use of the authorized signals. These are always illustrated in the backs of the various rules books.

Signal language has one notable limitation, and that is its constricted vocabulary. Although basketball has more signals than most sports, the 1991 NCAA Basketball Rules Book featured only 29 distinctively different signals. These 29 signals can be broken down into five separate categories:

Eight signals relating to clock operations
Seven signals depicting fouls
Six signals denoting violations
Six signals having to do with matters relating to scoring
Two signals that are purely directional signals.

Interestingly , one of the most frequently used of all the signals is not among those listed in the rules books. This is the signal used for reporting the jersey numbers of a player who has committed a foul. The proper method of executing this particular signal is detailed in officials manuals.

New officials often discover that it takes considerable time to become accustomed to the fact that the restricted number of au-

thorized signals does not allow for a separate and exclusive signal for each and every reporting situation. The degree of coverage varies from one category to another. In situations relating to timing and the timing devices, the authorized visual signals are quite thorough and adequately cover most occurrences.

On the other hand, for example, in basketball the six signals depicting violations are at best a perfunctory treatment of this major aspect of the signal language discipline. This lack of thoroughness is due to the infinite number of acts that can conceivably result in a violation.

Some common basketball rules violations, for which no specific visual signals are authorized include basket interference, goal tending, advancing the ball from a designated throw-in spot, illegal dunking, free throw lane violations, grasping the rim, etc.

Several things about visual signals that are not covered in the rules book or officials manual, which an official must know, are:

1. The proper way of handling a violation for which no authorized signal has been assigned is to give the stop clock signal and then verbally report the violations.
2. It is never wise to create signals where no certified signal exists.
3. Top notch officials are careful never to make a good call and then punctuate it with a poor signal.
4. Coaches react quickly and with outrage when officials missignal a call.

The use of hand signals is more than just a clever way of being understood over the roar of the crowd. It is a simple and succinct method of communication. One of the most common mistakes made by fledgling officials is trying to explain their entire decision making process relative to a call when a simple hand signal is all that is necessary.

Verbal communication carries in it the seeds of misunderstanding. When visual signals are properly used, misunderstandings are virtually eliminated. Hand signals foster better communication and create a better rapport between coaches and officials.

CHAPTER 10

State and Local Associations

EACH STATE HAS A HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION that governs interscholastic competition within its own boundaries. In turn, the respective state associations are members of the National Federation of State High School Associations and provide representataives to its various committees. Acting as an agent to promote universal standards in competition, the National Federation formulates rules of competition and regulates interscholastic athletics at the national and international levels.

This global organization was founded in 1921 at the invitation of L.W. Smith, secretary of the Illinois High School Athletic Association. In that year, the four neighboring states of Iowa, Michigan, Illinois,and Wisconsin became charter members of the organization that now consists of 50 individual state high school associations. Also affiliated with the National Federation are associations from the District of Columbia, Guam, the Philippines, St. Thomas, and St. Croix. Additional members of the Federation include interscholastic organizations from the Canadian provinces of Alberta, British Columbia, Labrador, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Nova Scota, Ontario, Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island, Quebec, and Saskatchewan and the Canadian School Sports Federation.

The legislative body of the National Federation is known as the National Council and is comprised of one representative from each member state association. Administration is vested in an Executive Committee of 12 members, and there is a large national staff.

Over the past half century, the state organizations have become progressively more reliant upon the National Federation for policies and procedures relative to the adoption and administration of contest rules. The national organization has also assumed a dominant leadership role in promoting uniform standards in the area of officiating mechanics.

Membership in a professional association is important for all sports officials, from the neophyte to the old hand. The state associations serve their members in a variety of ways, including recognition for outstanding performance. Here, members of the California Football Officials Association participate in their annual awards ceremony.
Photo by Bob Messina.

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As the National Federation and the NCAA have assumed greater roles in the design and application of mechanics and contest rules, state associations have devoted increased resources to governing league competition within their affiliate jurisdiction. State associations oversee the licensing of officials, classification of the various levels of competition, alignment of interscholastic competition leagues, and the overall management of interscholastic sports within their respective states.

Sports officials will find it beneficial to familiarize themselves with the policies and function of both the National Federation and the state association in their home state. It is through the state association or one of its local affiliates that referees, umpires and others are credentialed to practice as sports officials.

Each year, the National Federation of State High School Associations publishes a complete and updated directory of the respective state high school associations, including address, phone and FAX numbers, names of key staff members, and information about meetings and publications. The Directory is contained in the National Federation's *Handbook*, which is published annually and should be purchased by all active and prospective sports officials. The Directory of Member State Associations provides the reader with all the information needed to become fully informed about the details of becoming a certified sports official in a particular state.

The *Handbook* (its official title) is a veritable encyclopedia of information relevant to the world of sports officiating. In addition to the directory of member state associations, the *Handbook* includes sections with such headings as: Coaches and Officials, National Resource Center, Rules Writing Activity, Interstate Events, Nonschool Sponsored Activities, National High School Sports Hall of Fame Awards (including officials), and Sports Participation Survey. The current Handbook costs only a few dollars and can be ordered from:

National Federation of State High School Associations
11724 Plaza Circle
P.O. Box 20626
Kansas City, MO 64195

Those looking for the *Handbook*'s counterpart at the college and university level will find it in the annual *NCAA Directory*. The contents and titles are updated annually to reflect the current school year.

The *NCAA Directory* contains a listing of over 1,000 colleges and universities along with the names and information necessary for contacting their respective athletic directors. It also contains pertinent information relevant to over 100 separate athletic conferences. Of particular interest to sports officials is the *NCAA Directory*'s listing of affiliated members. This section provides the reader with

the information needed to identify and contact the various coaches and officiating associations. The list of 60 or so includes such little publicized but highly regarded groups as the Black Coaches Association and the International Association of Approved Basketball Officials, Inc.

The *NCAA Directory* can be ordered from:

NCAA Publishing
P.O. Box 7347
Overland Park, KS 66207-0347

When ordering ask for a complete list of NCAA sports library materials.

Glossary

AD—Initials commonly used when referring to the athletic director.

ANGLE—Officiating angle, the mechanics of positioning yourself so that you are located at a proper angle relative to play to ensure an unobstructed field of vision.

APOLOGY CALL—Although not likely to be confirmed, some sports announcers and writers make the observation that some officials after making a questionable call will try to restore credibility by making a call favorable to the offended team.

AWAY FROM PLAY—Any game-related activity that takes place away from the ball while the ball is in play.

BACKPEDALING—The practice by officials of running backwards. Once thought to be an excellent mechanic. The more accepted mechanic among current instructors of officials is the forward body posture with the head looking over the shoulder.

BALL CHASER—Term used to characterize those officials who, with an apparent disregard for what is going on among the players, some officials have an affinity for pursuing loose balls even to the point of leaving players unattended while they crawl under the bleachers to retrieve loose balls.

BLACKBALL (BLACKLIST)—Actions, usually informal, taken by coaches and/or athletic directors barring a particular official from working games in which their schools are competing.

CALL FOR HELP—Frequently, the official who has the primary responsibility for making a call will be at a loss as to what to call, in which case he or she will "Call for help" from their fellow official. So as not to give the appearance that they are asleep at the wheel, "call for help" signals are usually worked out by officials during pregame conferences.

CANARY—An official who has the annoying habit of producing a series of whistle blasts instead of one strong report when making a call.

CHIPPING—Refers to the practice by some coaches of directing verbal abuse at an official.

CHOKING—A term used to describe the inability of an official to sound the whistle and stop play even though he or she is sure an infraction occurred.

CHOKING SIGN—Hand to the throat is a universally recognized signal used by irate coaches to accuse an official of being derelict in his duty. The signal will assuredly elicit a technical foul for the coach.

CIRCUMSTANTIAL EVIDENCE CALL—A call that is made based on inductive/deductive reasoning rather than upon actual sight observation.

CLOSING THE CALL—The practice of moving toward the spot of the infraction on which the call is being made.

CONDUCTING A CLINIC—Refers to the practice of some officials who spend an inordinate amount of time during the game explaining rules. Often the coach who is not benefiting from such actions will admonish the official to "Just make the call, don't stand there conducting a clinic!"

DEAD TIME—Periods during the game when time is out and players are meeting with coaches, leaving the officials with discretionary time.

DELAYED CALL—A purposely late call by the official. An excellent example of a delayed call occurs when during a free throw attempt an opponent commits a violation, but the official delays making the call until the attempt is completed. If the basket is made the infraction is ignored.

DING—A term commonly used to describe a report in which a coach or school administrator makes unfavorable comments about an official, but stops short of blacklisting the individual.

DIVIDING THE COURT— The officials manuals provide guides to aid officials in dividing the court relative to areas of primary responsibility.

DOUBLE WHISTLE—When two or more officials sound their whistles simultaneously.

DUCK BACK—A term used to describe an official who repels the hue and cry of irate critics with the same ease as water running off a duck's back.

ELASTIC POWERS—The discretionary authority extended officials when administering certain rules. For example, in basketball, for all restraining area infractions, a variable penalty is authorized, e.g., it may be a warning, awarding of the ball to the offended team, or a technical foul for delay of game.

EYE CONTACT—Although the rules book provides a well defined set of hand signals for officials to use in communicating with scorers and timers, it is void of such signals for use between officials. In the absence of any official signals, officials rely on body language, for which good eye contact is imperative.

FUNNY BOOK—A reference to the simplified and illustrated rules books published by the National Federation for football and basketball.

HAND CHECKING—In contact sports, the practice of a defensive player using the hands to locate and/or determine the directional movement of an opponent.

HEAT (TAKING THE HEAT)—A phrase used to describe the standard mechanics wherein an official making a contested call moves across court or away from the scene, while his/her partner stays near the coaches box enduring a tongue lashing.

HELICOPTER MECHANICS—Using both hands at once to give signals. Most associations want officials to use only one hand when hand signals are given, but some officials will raise one hand to stop the clock and in

the same motion use their other hand to signal the direction of the team which is to receive the ball.

HITCHHIKER'S MOTION—The thumbs thrown over the shoulder in baseball is the signal for out; in basketball, the signal for held ball; and in volleyball, the signal for out of bounds.

HOLLYWOODING— Pretending to be fouled when in fact you are not. If done with intent to deceive the official, such may play acting, faking it, grandstanding, or Academy Award act.

HOMER—An official who is reputed to harbor a cronyistic relationship with coaches at the schools he or she works.

HORSE TRADER—An official who seeks to escape the realities of making tough calls by ignoring the obvious infractions and then showering the coach with politeness and politics in order to maintain rapport. Also, an official who has a reputation of using "make-up" calls.

ICING—A term used by coaches and sportscasters to describe the act of disrupting the flow of the game by calling a timeout just as the opponent steps to the line to attempt a free throw or to kick a field goal

INCONSISTENCY—Allowing a particular event to pass as a "no call" in one stage of the game only to penalize the identical event during another stage of the game.

I'VE GOT THE CLOCK—The official who is in the best position to see the timing device will normally make all decisions relative to when time expires. As a professional courtesy, near the end of a period, he or she will remind the other official, "I've got the clock."

I'VE GOT THE COUNT—In situations such as in-bounding the ball, where there is a time constraint, the official with primary responsibility will often remind his partner, "I've got the count."

JUDGMENT CALL—A call which could go either way. But, in the judgment of the official, the correct call is the one he or she makes regardless of arguments to the contrary.

LATE WHISTLE—The annoying practice of the official sounding his/her whistle well after the actual time an infraction occurred.

LEAVING THE SCENE—Frequently, when an official is forced to make a controversial call near the coaches bench, he/she will quickly and discreetly leave and switch positions with a fellow official so as to avoid a possible confrontation with players or coaches.

LETTING THEM PLAY—The practice of not over-officiating by making ticky-tacky calls that have no bearing on the outcome of the game.

LONG DISTANCE CALL—A call made by an official who is not in close proximity to the infraction he/she is calling.

LOOKING OFF THE BALL—The practice of observing activities in the area where an official has primary responsibility without regard as to the location of the ball.

MAKE UP CALL—An irresponsible call favoringg a team that was recently assessed a penalty. Coaches have sometimes accused game officials of trying to achieve equity in a contest by intentionally making such a call.

MAKING THE EASY CALL— This situation arises when the official is faced with the necessity of choosing between two infractions occurring simultaneously or nearly simultaneously.

MANUALS—The composite of books and publications used by officials to interpret rules and administer contest procedures, including the rules books, case books, illustrated rules books, and officials manual.

NO CALLS— "No calls" occur when an infraction is committed but in the considered judgment of the officials it is

incidental and can have no impact upon the outcome of the game, so that he/she ignores the infraction and does not make any call.

OFF THE BALL—A term used to describe the focus of an official who is observing the activities of players who are a considerable distance from the ball.

OFFICIALS LINE—That rea of the court or playing field where the respective official has to accept primary responsibility for observing and calling infractions occurring therein.

OPENING IT UP—A technique whereby officials will pull back from the boundary line in order to enhance their vision of the field of play.

OVERHUSSLE—A characterization used to describe overzealous officials who try to be all over the field of play.

OVERSELL—The act of dramatizing simple and routine calls such as lane violations and out of bounds infractions.

PACING—The strategy of controlling the tempo of the game in order to reduce the amount of extraneous activity during the game.

PICK—A term frequently used by sportscasters and others to describe a screen. Also a maneuver wherein a player without tripping or holding uses his/her body to obstruct the movement of an opponent.

PICKET FENCE—Where two or more players on the same team stand in a straight line in such close proximity to one another that an opponent cannot move freely between them.

PREVENTATIVE CALL— Perhaps, the most common of all preventative calls occurs when players are swarming over a loose ball in an attempt to gain control, and in order to prevent violence and avert injury, the official calls a hold ball. (His good intentions notwithstanding, this is considered poor judgement by almost all sports rules interpreters

PREVENTATIVE OFFICIATING—The practice of making an unnecessary call for incidental actions in the beliet that it might prevent the occurence of a major infraction, e.g., in basketball, calling a held ball in order to prevent a foul from developing. Not usually encouraged.

PROGRAMMING—An attempt by a coach to plant in the mind of an official the preconceived notion that an opponent can be counted upon to commit certain infractions.

QUICK CALL—Describes the premature action of an official who in anticipation of an infraction makes the call before it actually happens. Quick calls leave the penalized team with the impression that the official is overly anxious to place them at a disadvantage.

RABBIT'S EARS—Officials who are oversensitive to criticisms from players and coaches.

REFFING THE BENCH—A term used to describe an official who is prone to spending an inordinate amount of time observing activities on the bench while ignoring the athletic contest.

RINGING IT UP—Phrase sometime used to describe the actions of an official who becomes unusually demonstrative when making a call.

RUN HIM/HER—Term used by some officials meaning a player was ejected from the game.

SCRATCH—An act, usually initiated by a school, of declaring an official unacceptable to officiate athletic contests on their campus.

SEAT BELT RULE—Refers to the provision inserted into the high school rules during the early 80s that requires coaches, with few exceptions, to remain seated during the game. The rule prompted some to suggest that seat belts be installed to keep coaches in their proper place.

SELLING A CALL—Being in proper position and making a clear and timely call so that the official's credibility is never suspect.

STAYING OUT OF THE GAME—The avoidance on the part of officials of acting in any way that might draw attention to themselves or otherwise upstage players or coaches.

SWALLOWING THE WHISTLE—A term, probably coined by fans and coaches, to describe an official who consistantly overlooks obvious infractions . Also referred to as "choking."

TAGGING—Same as handchecking. The legality of such maneuvers varies from sport to sport and from league to league.

TAKING A CALL AWAY—An accusatory termi used by disgruntled coaches or fans to convey the message that a call belonging to one official was wrongfully made by another official.

TERRITORIAL—The insistence by an official that her/his partner not make calls that fall within the confines of that portion of the playing area that has been previously identified as his or her area of responsibility.

TOUCH FOUL—A foul that is assessed as a result of incidental contact. Most touch fouls, if they have no impact upon the contest, could be treated as "no calls."

UNCALL—To miss or fail to make a call that should have been made is an "uncall." The term is frequently used by instructors to illustrate that there is a real distinction between acts of omission, i.e., "uncalls," and "no calls," which should be made when stopping play would serve no purpose.

WEAK SISTER—Term used by some officials when referring to a partner who is inexperienced, inept, or both.

WEAK WHISTLE—An anemic report from the official's whistle that raises doubts as to whether or not he/she really was convinced of the call.

WHISTLEBLOWER—Official who disrupts the tempo of the game, turning it into a free throw contest by calling every conceivable infraction.

ZEBRA—Used to describe a sports official who wears the black and white striped shirts.

The writing of this book was motivated by promptings from sports officials and trainers of sports officials who have expressed the need for a text detailing the fundamental techniques for building successful career paths. Through careful research the author has prepared a book that sets forth a simplified career development plan for officials. The book illustrates how sports officiating can be taken from the hobby status to a profit-oriented business and at the same time enhance personal understanding and enjoyment of sports.

M.C. O'Bryant, the author of this "how to do it" manual, has officiated in basketball for 25 years, at all levels, and has been a certified official in Oklahoma, Utah, and California. A teacher in the Contra Costa County Public Schools (California), he has successfully developed a second profession and owns his own small business operation. His Sports Officials Clearing House, in Martinez, provides clinics for basketball officials, with emphasis on mechanics and careers. Through this book, O'Bryant shares his years of experience with both neophytes and old timers and offers the contents of his clinics to all readers.

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